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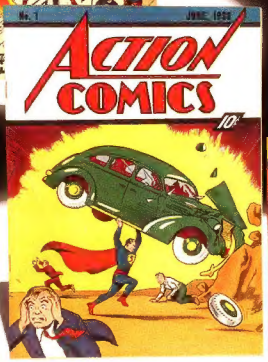

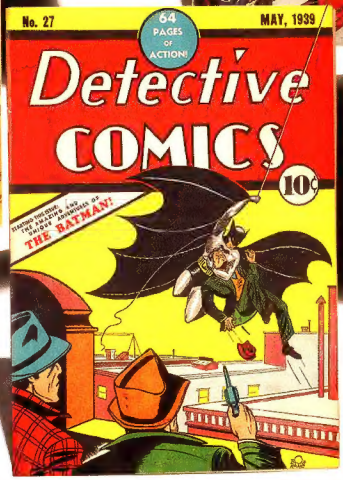

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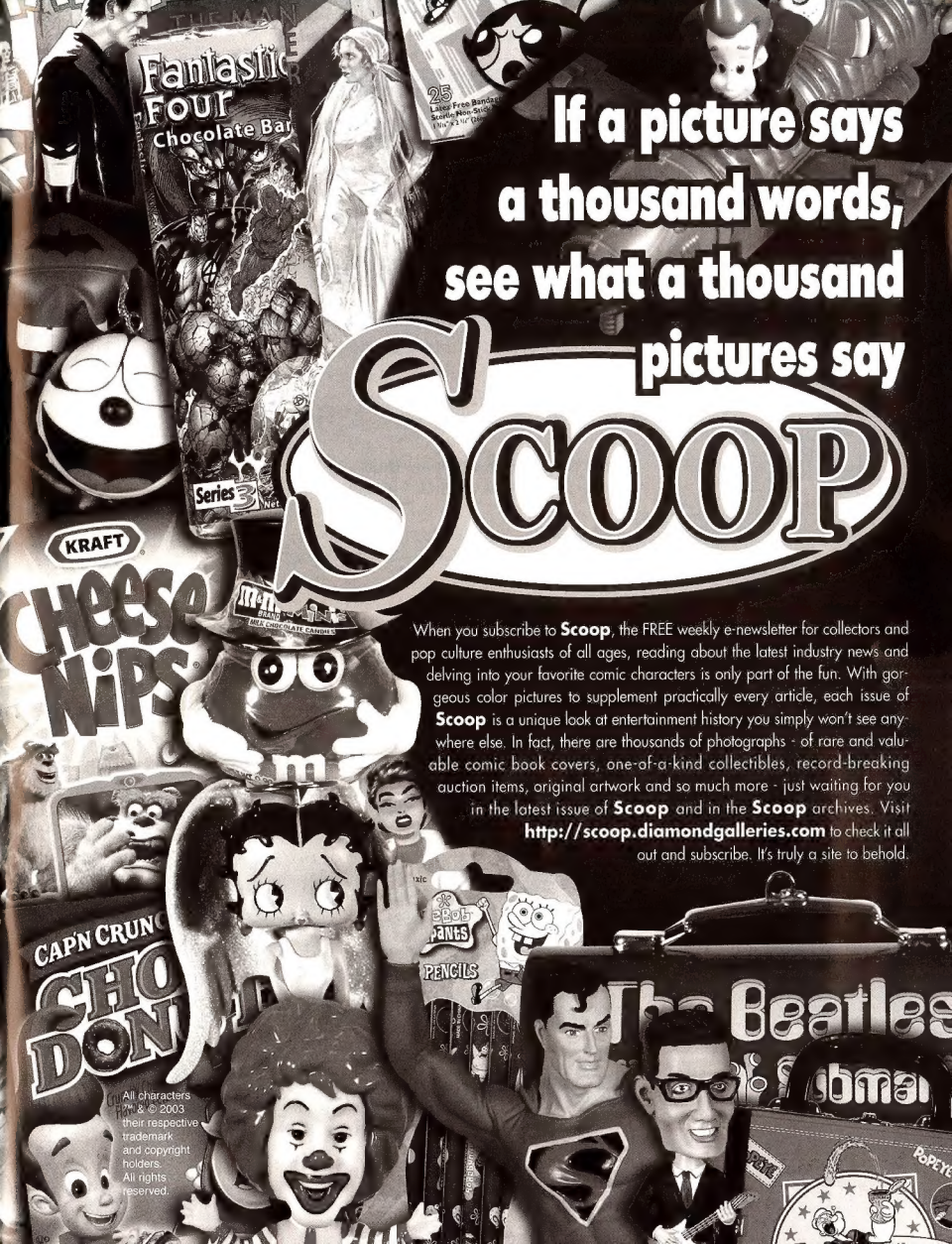
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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

Vol. 3 No. 106 September 2003

FEATURES

16 **Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls**
Penned pulchritude by **R.C. Harvey**

26 **John Celardo**
The Unsung Hero-Maker by **Alberto Becattini**

33 **A History of Good Girl Art**
(with a CBM Bathing Beauties presentation) by **Ron Goulart**

48 **Paper Tigress**
The magical gal in the tawny catsuit by **Will Murray**

63 **Rima, The Jungle Girl**
A book, a movie, a Classics Illustrated, a DC series by **Steven Fears**

COLUMNS

7 **Nolan's Notebook**
Early Archies skimpy on skin, by **Michelle Nolan**

12 **Weird Words**
Xela's jungals, by **Pat Calhoun**

14 **Inspiration Central: Mark Millar**
Interview by **Bill Baker**

15 **The Greatest Comic Book Ever**
Amazing Spider-Man #102, by **Mauricio Heilbron**

68 **The Michael Naiman Report**
More potpourri, by **Michael Naiman**

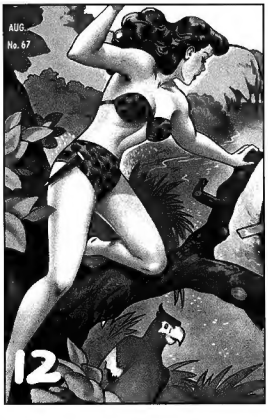
70 **CBM MarketWatch and Market Reports**
Sampling marketplace indicator sales, compiled by **Michael Naiman**

77 **That Wonderful Year**
This month it's 1943, by **Michelle Nolan**

DEPARTMENTS

6 **Marketplace Mail**

79 **Book Review**
Al Williamson Adventures, by **Paul Gravett**



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Letter from the Editor

It had to happen eventually. This is our *CBM* "Swimsuit Issue"! No, it won't be an annual event, just every now and then when we feel compelled to devote an issue to all those pretty girls who romped through the comic books we love. Even when I was under 10 years old, and a staunch member of the "He-Man Woman Hater's Club," I liked those Sheena covers better than the Kaanga covers, and probably didn't even know why.

But the sweaty men who all wore suits and ties and worked in those hot office buildings in New York City, the men who wrote and drew and packaged the comics features, they knew it, even if we didn't. Who buys most of the comic books that are sold? Boys. Pre-pubescent and adolescent boys. So what do you put on the covers of these comic books to attract those boys? Lots of action, lots of heroic men, and lots of good-looking girls. And how do we know they are good-looking unless they are wearing some kind of outfit or costume that lets us know they are girls?

Call it good-girl art if you please, but as well-known pro writer Ron Goulart says in his article in this issue, it's not about art that shows "good girls," it's about good art applied to both good and bad girls. Heroines, villainesses, even the girls next door like Betty and Veronica—they all had protuberances in the right places to attract us. So, with no more of an excuse than that, we present a fond look (not a leer) at all those beautiful babes that populated the pages of our favorite comic books.

About three months ago I wrote in this column that R.C. Harvey had announced that he was ending his "Funnies Farrago" column because he had too many other commitments. But when Bob heard about this swimsuit issue he decided he had to contribute to it, and you will enjoy his article about the "good girl art" done by Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, and Milton Caniff. Thanks, Bob, and you know you are always welcome back in these pages.

Russ Cochran
Editor and Publisher

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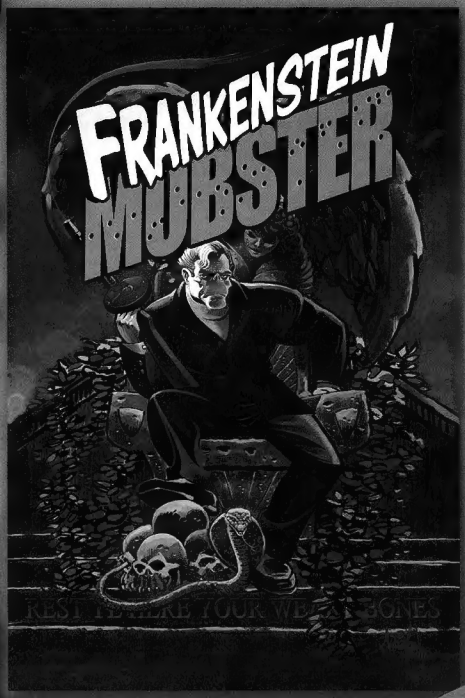

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her after that—she was married at the time, though, as her name became Mikki Jamison-Olsen.

I hope this satisfies the curiosity of your writer. And I enjoyed the magazine! It's been a few years since I've picked up a copy, but it was very entertaining! Regards,

Arthur Chertowsky
via e-mail

Archie's everything

In issue 101 of your magazine there was an article about the early 1960s *Archie* TV show pilot. The writer of that article asked if anyone out here in reader-land knew the names of the actresses who played "Betty" and "Veronica." Would you be so kind as to see the information below forwarded to him?

"Betty" was played by Cheryl Holdridge, one of the original Mickey Mouse Mouseketeers of the 1950s. She had a recurring role for several years up until 1963 as Wally's girlfriend in *Leave It to Beaver*. She made a notable transition to sexpot/ingénue in a very early *Bewitched* episode in which she tried to seduce Darren. I don't know what happened to her career after that, but she's still alive, and about a year or two ago I saw a recent photo of her at, I believe, a celebrity convention or *Mouse* reunion.

"Veronica" was played by Mikki Jamison; in 1969 she made several appearances as Kent McCord's wife on *Adam-12*. In the late '70s, she had the female lead as a reporter in a family-oriented movie about boats or some such—I don't remember the name of the movie, but her co-star was Robert Logan, and a search of her name on the Movies Unlimited website will bring up that movie title—it'll be the only result of the search. I don't know what happened to

Harvey's hits

As usual, *CBM* # 102 was great. There's always something for everyone, and this issue is no exception.

I want to thank R.C. Harvey for sharing a few *footnits* (neat term) about Caniff and the Steve Canyon statue. I didn't know that Ray Bailey had done those caricatures of Caniff's characters. I'm glad to learn that. Also, it has been 25+ years since I have *actually* stopped in Idaho Springs, Colorado (these days I pass through it on the way to ski in Keystone or Breckenridge), so the exact location of the statue was a little fuzzy. I'm glad to know that it's actually on the town's edge.

I also want to comment on R.C.H.'s column, "Funnies Farrago," about Bill Mauldin. I'm always grateful to learn even more about Bill Mauldin. The more I read about him, the more I appreciate and admire his life's accomplishments. Ever since my father gave me a much read and well worn copy of *Up Front* (I still have it), I have always loved Mauldin's Willie and Joe. Those cartoons capture the spirit and heart of the G.I. He is missed by many. In fact, a gentleman who is a volunteer at the museum served with Bill Mauldin and told me a few things about him such as his attitude toward Patton.

Bill Mauldin was associated with the 45th Division and since the 45th Division Museum is here in Oklahoma City, I've been able to visit it and see the Bill Mauldin room just filled with copies of many of his cartoons (the originals are kept in a vault to preserve them). If you ever are in Oklahoma City, I highly recommend this museum located just off I-35 on Northeast 36th Street. In fact, the whole museum is worth seeing. The 45th has a long and proud history.

Steve Fears
Oklahoma City, OK

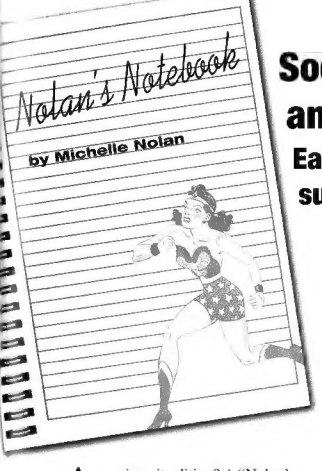
Amash on Fox on Biro

I really liked the coverage on Lev Gleason in issue 102, but I want to call your attention to two things in Michael Feldman's article. First of all, the paragraph where Gill Fox talked about Charlie Biro and Bob Wood painting women in the nude, was taken straight from my *Alter Ego* (#12, 2002) interview with Gill. There was no attribution of any kind for the verbatim quote of an entire paragraph.

Also, earlier in the piece, is an incorrect retelling of the time Gill Fox was riding in a car with Charlie Biro. Here, from the same interview, is what Gill Fox told me: 'One time, we're riding in Biro's car and he looks over at a parked car, sees a hub cap and says, "Hey! That has a hubcap like mine! I'm missing a hubcap!" Then, he hands me a screwdriver and says, "Go get that hubcap!" He was crazy!'

I would appreciate a correction and proper attribution of where these stories came from, in *CBM*. When I contacted Michael Feldman about this, he said he included footnotes at the end—at the last minute—citing the source of the stories, but due to lack of space, they were not in the published article. If this is true, you should have run the source citations. In the future, I suggest your writers fully cite

[continued on page 74]



Soda Fountains and Swim Suits

Early Archie titles are surprisingly skimpy on skin

A swimsuit edition? A "Nolan's Notebook" covering comic book swimsuit covers? OK, boss. Why not? I've always said I could write about almost anything involving old comic books.

I have to admit being surprised, though, after looking through hundreds and hundreds of 1940s and '50s teen humor titles from Archie and DC, searching for sand-and-swimsuit themes on the covers. Here's the bare truth about what I discovered. I was surprised, and I'll bet a skimpy bikini that you will be, too.

I checked all 506 cover appearances of the Archie characters through 1959 issues. Except for *Pep Comics* #65 (Jan 1948), I have all 447 Archie character comics from 1948-59 and the *Gerber Photo-Journal* provided the evidence for the 1941-47 issues, some of which I don't have.

So, how many swimsuit and/or beach covers do you think were on those 506 comic books? The answer is exactly 13! Betty and Veronica in swimsuits only 13 times over nearly two decades—no wonder Archie was always so girl-crazy!

Look at it this way: DC put lovable ditz Judy Foster in cover-featured swimsuits more often in the last three years of *A Date with Judy* (#60-79)—14 times in a run of 20 issues—than the Archie series did in all those early years!

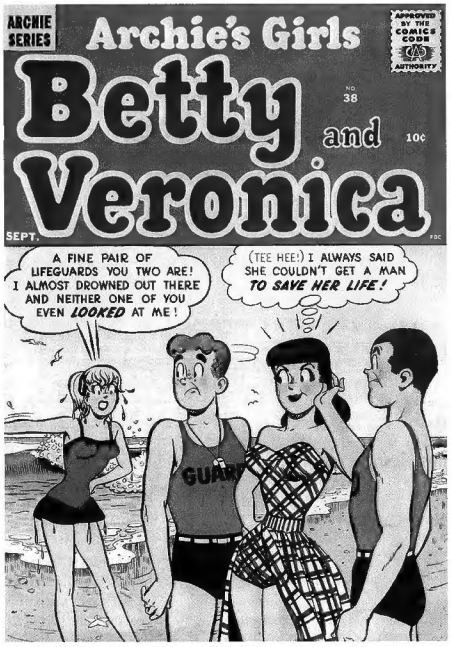
The mind boggles! Not to mention the sensibilities of Judy's long-suffering boyfriend, Oogie Pringle. I guess the frolicsome folks at DC were a little more skin-centered than the more sober-minded fellows at Archie.

On the other hand, soda-fountains and milkshakes—usually at Pop Tate's Riverdale Choklit Shoppe—were the theme of no fewer than 73 Archie family covers through 1959. It's a wonder the Riverdale gang, females included, didn't all eventually look like Big Moose!

Lots of folks under 40 today don't realize that fast-food outlets such as McDonald's and Wendy's didn't really get going until the 1960s. Before that, the soda-fountains—oh, there were wonderful soda-fountains everywhere!—and drive-ins were where teenagers hung out. The Archie series reflects that.

Since my collection is primarily from the era of 10-cent comic books, I don't have enough Archie comics from the 1960s onward to make a scientific survey of swimsuit covers of the past four decades. But my bet is that there was an ever-increasing percentage of swimsuit covers and an ever-decreasing percentage of soda-fountain covers. Considering all the thousands of Archie-type issues published in the past 40 years or so, I'd say the chances of learning the answer are about as good as Jughead passing up a hamburger.

As hard as it seems to believe, Betty and Veronica never appeared on any covers in swimsuits in the 1940s. They did wear swimsuits in a number of stories, of course. In fact, during the entire run of Archie's first 106 issues


ARCHIE SERIES
Archie's Girls
Betty and Veronica
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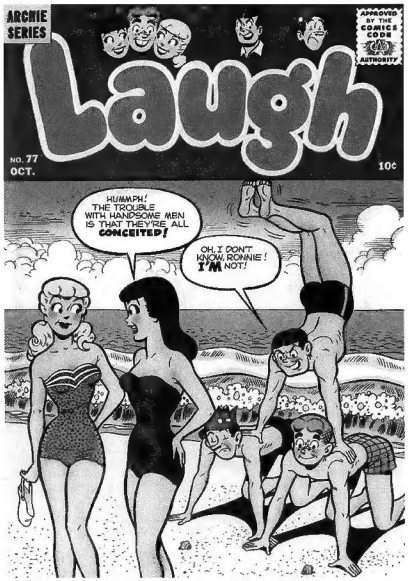
NO 38
10¢
SEPT.
A FINE PAIR OF LIFEGUARDS YOU TWO ARE! I ALMOST DROWNED OUT THERE AND NEITHER ONE OF YOU EVEN LOOKED AT ME!
(TEE HEE!) I ALWAYS SAID SHE COULDN'T GET A MAN TO SAVE HER LIFE!

Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica #38 (Sep 1957).

from1942-59, the B&V beauties appeared in a beach cover scene exactly once! That was on the cover of #95 (Sep 1958).

But then, maybe that's not so surprising. The vast majority of female swimsuits in the 1940s and '50s were one-piece suits, with belly buttons a most uncommon sight (and even more uncommonly illustrated!).


ARCHIE SERIES
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Laugh
NO. 77 OCT.
10¢
HUMMPH! THE TROUBLE WITH HANDSOME MEN IS THAT THEY'RE ALL CONCEITED!
OH, I DON'T KNOW, RONNIE! I'M NOT!

Laugh #77 (Oct 1956).

For example, I checked a book in my film reference library entitled *Film-Star Portraits of the Fifties*, and there were no bikini shots! Or any poses in two-piece suits, for that matter.

There's a 1955 photo of six teen girls, all about 17 or 18 years old, on the beach in the teenage social history *Twixt* (1983), all in one-piece swimsuits with nary a belly button in sight. I guarantee, though, that if six girls strolled down a beach for a similar photo today, they would be laughed off the sand in stodgy swimsuits like that.

On the other hand, *Young Marilyn*, a handsome 1994 volume by Marilyn Monroe archivist James Haspiel, is loaded with seldom-seen late 1940s and early 1950s photos of Marilyn in some of the earliest two-piece and bikini styles.

Indeed, it took the likes of Monroe and her French counterpart, Brigitte Bardot, to effectively wear bikinis and two-pieces in the 1950s. But even Bardot wasn't often seen in such outfits in her early film years (beginning in 1952, when she was 18) although there are a few such photos in the classic 1975 history *Bebe, The Films of Brigitte Bardot*.

Lana Turner was among the first to popularize the two-piece swimsuit in the noirish *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Even so, two-piece outfits wouldn't be ready for most comics for a good long while.

The other early Archie family swimsuit covers include: *Archie's Rival Reggie* #3 (1951); *Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica* #32 (Sep 1957), #38 (Sep 1958) and #46 (Oct 1959); *Archie's Pal Jughead* #14 (Oct 1952); *Pep Comics* #99 (Sep 1953) and #129 (Sep 1958); *Little Archie* #4 (Fall 1957); *Archie's Pals 'N Gals* #9 (Summer 1959); and *Laugh Comics* #53 (Oct 1952), #77 (Oct 1956) and #102 (Sep 1959).

You'll notice that all of these comics hit the stands during summer months. That explains partly the paucity of swimsuits, since the Archie editors had that East Coast mentality and obviously didn't think there was much of a nation-wide weather window for appealing swimsuit covers. Soda-fountain covers, on the other hand, were good any time.

I grew up on the West Coast, in California and Washington, and thus as a youngster I had no real idea of how limited the opportunities were to wear swimsuits in much of the nation, where the effects of winter often hit as early as October and lingered well into April or even May.

Of the 13 Archie titles with swimsuit covers in the 1940s and '50s, not a single one had a close-up of either Betty or Veronica in a two-piece. In fact, each was in a modest two-piece only once, and then in a background pose—Veronica in *Jughead* #14 and Betty in *Pep* #99. Betty and Veronica were well over 20 years "old" before they ever appeared in a cover-featured bikini pose.

DC used teen swimsuit covers far more often than Archie, but DC was just as modest in their portrayal. There were a total of 216 issues of *A Date with Judy*, *Leave It to Binky* and *Buzzy*, and a whopping 49 featured swimsuit covers! That is an amazing disparity of creative cover thought between DC and Archie, isn't it?

Even so, although DC's artists designed a remarkable variety of colorful one-piece swimsuits, that was all they ever portrayed on these three successful teen titles, which began with *Buzzy* #1 in 1944 and ended with *Date with Judy* #79 in 1960. In only one case, *Buzzy* #14 (Jul/Aug 1947), was even a small two-piece swimsuit portrayed.

Youngsters who read the Archie and DC teen titles thus were simply never exposed to even remotely revealing swimsuits, both before and after the Comics Code took charge. It is typical, of course, that all the females were portrayed as gorgeous, full-busted and leggy on virtually all of these covers.

Like Archie, most of the DC teen titles featured swimsuit covers on issues that hit the stands during the summer months. Of the 79 *Judy* issues, 25 featured swimsuit covers; of the 77 *Buzzy* issues, 14 showed skin; and of the

A Date with Judy #60 (Sep 1957).

60 *Binky* books, 10 portrayed swimsuits. Of course, title star Judy presented far more opportunity for exposure.

It's also fascinating to note that DC almost never featured a soda-fountain cover on its teen humor titles. In fact, *A Date with Judy* had only one—#51 (Feb/Mar 1956)—and even that was a marginal four-panel sight-gag cover. And between *Buzzy* and *Binky* combined, the only soda-fountain cover was *Buzzy* #19 (May/Jun 1948).

It's truly amazing how much more often Archie stressed soda-fountain covers than DC did. Archie also stressed school-scene covers much more often. It's fascinating to observe how two such competent and best-selling comic book producers could be so different.

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By the by, Sheldon Mayer's delightfully unique *Sugar and Spike* series, which ran 98 issues from1956-71, regularly featured holiday-theme covers involving Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day. It's interesting to note, though, that 18 issues—all with summer arrival dates—featured the charming baby duo on the beach in swimsuits.

All of this research on humor titles also made me curious about DC's romance comics. They were published from 1949-77, with a total of 917 issues covering *Girls' Love Stories* #1-180, *Girls' Romances* #1-160, *Secret Hearts* #1-153, *Falling in Love* #1-143, and *Heart Throbs* #47-144/*Love Stories* #145-152, plus *Young Love* #39-126 and *Young Romance* #125-208 (the latter two titles were picked up from Prize in 1963). There were also three DC giant romance comics published in 1970-71.

How many swimsuit covers were there? I checked my set of DC romance and discovered the surprising answer: only 59 swimsuit issues! (Unless I overlooked one or two!) Of the 243 DC romance issues published through 1959, the swimsuit issues totaled only 17.

The vast majority of the 1950s DC romance covers featured one-piece suits, although there were two surprising exceptions. *Girls' Romances* #16 (Aug/Sep 1952) and *Secret Hearts* #23 (Aug/Sep 1954) featured not just one two piece outfit on their covers, but a pair of women wearing them on both covers

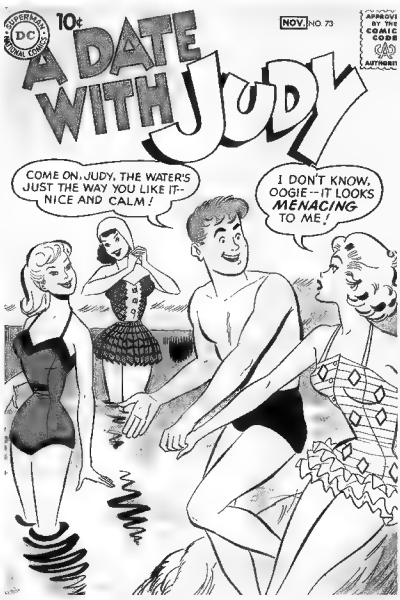
Those, however, were the only genuine two-piece swimsuits cover-featured on any 1950s DC romance comics! The only other suggestion that two-pieces even existed was the Hawaiian romance photo cover of *Girls' Romances* #4 (Aug/Sep 1950), but that was more of a Polynesian outfit than a true swimsuit.

As for post-Comics Code issues, it wasn't until *Secret Hearts* #93 (Jan 1964) that another two-piece swimsuit was seen on the cover of another DC romance comic—nine years after the Comics Code had been established! *Young Romance* #132 (Nov 1964), *Girls' Love Stories* #111 (May 1965) and *Girls' Romances* #114 (Jan 1966) were the next two-piece covers, but they were then dropped until 1968

From that point on, two-pieces predominated, although a few one-piece covers were used even in the 1970s, apparently for style variations or at the artist's whim.

It wasn't until the 1970s that a woman in a suggestive two-piece swimsuit was portrayed kissing a bare-chested man on a DC romance cover. I guess that would have been absolutely verboten under the first decade of the Comics Code, although I haven't checked through my collection of romance comics from other companies.

By far the sexiest DC swimsuit cover was Nick Cardy's masterpiece for *Super DC Giant* #17 (Oct 1970), entitled "Love 1970." This love-on-the-beach cover absolutely sizzles! There's also a highly suggestive "bikini kiss" cover on *Young Love* #92 (Feb 1972).


DC
10¢
NOV. NO. 73
A DATE WITH JUDY
COME ON, JUDY, THE WATER'S JUST THE WAY YOU LIKE IT-NICE AND CALM!
I DON'T KNOW, OOGIE--IT LOOKS MENACING TO ME!
A Date with Judy #73 (Nov 1959).

These are the 1950s DC romance comics with swimsuit covers: *Girls' Love* #3, 8, 22, 56; *Girls' Romances* #4, 16, 28, 34, 49, 59, 61; *Secret Hearts* #6, 23, 30, 55, 58; and *Falling in Love* #28.

Many DC romance comics carried idealized stories that were, in their way, often less realistic than super-hero comics—given the parameters of the setting—and thus truly required the proverbial "suspension of disbelief." Yet I've always felt that these romance comics are wonderful period pieces, reflecting as they do the fashions, fads and popular culture of their era

That's why it's not surprising to me that two-piece swimsuits were a DC comic cover rarity through the mid-1960s. Two-piece or bikini swimsuits were synonymous with daring, not to mention far too revealing of body flaws! As for actually portraying belly buttons on romance covers—well, no.

Actually, just imagine if the parents of the girls who read 1950s and 1960s DC romance comics and the girls themselves, many of whom are now grandparents—could have foreseen the way teen girls walk around today—on or off the beach! I have a strong feeling they would not have believed it!

Nor, perhaps, would you have believed that you ever would be reading an essay on comic-book swimsuit covers. I sure didn't ever expect to write one!

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[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	CC	"Unknown Soldier"

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Come to the prize filled Halloween Masquerade Party, October 31, where more than $40,000 in cash and prizes will be awarded. First place winners in each category will win $2,000, and a "Best in Show" winner will receive a total of $10,000 in cash.

Due to overwhelming response, exhibit space is now limited.

by Pat Calhoun

Xela's Jungals

The post-World War II years started comics on a rise to their greatest point of popularity, sales that would peak in the early 1950s at around a billion books a year. One of the reasons for this growth was that comics appealed to all age groups, and at this particular time the thousands of GI's back from the war and needing entertainment—ensured that comics would market to adults as well as kids. This eventually led to a backlash as critics (armed with their various agendas) claimed that adult-oriented comics falling into children's hands increased juvenile delinquency. The passing of the Comics Code in 1954 "killed" the crime and horror genres, and sales fell by 90% across the board. In homage to those halcyon years let's look at a prime example of how comics packaged that most adult of commodities: "cheesecake."

THE MOON SPIDER! ROBIN, LOOK OUT!
IT'S LEGS... LIKE STEEL BANDS ON MY BACK AHHHH...
IN TIMO, COURAGE BLOOMS AS FLAMES LIKE A SMOKING SHOWER
HAVE NO FEAR, TARA — I OWE YOU MY LIFE, AND I WOULD DIE TO DEFEND YOU!
SADDENED BY THE DEAFENING ATOM GUN BLAST, THE MOON SPIDERS TURN ON THE BRIGANDS!
TARA! ROBIN! WE MUST GET BACK TO THE SHIP! HURRY!
KEEP CLOSE TO ME, TIMO, LAD! WE'LL MAKE IT!
I FEAR NEITHER MAN NOR SPIDER, NOW, TARA! IF YOU BUT SAY THE WORD I'LL GO BACK FOR THE JEWELS!

Gene Fawcette's Pantha swings into action. Of course over at Fiction House Sheena had been doing the *jungal* thing for a decade in one of their multi-genre anthology titles, **Jumbo Comics**. (**Thrilling** #67)

Thrilling #67 (Aug 1948) A full image field, a minimum of "blurbs," and no "balloons" packaged the Xela covers to maximum effect. Pantha's beauty is matched by her lethal ability on this unforgettable masterpiece.

Cheesecake—in this non-politically-correct sense—is the display of female flesh to tantalize and delight. But some of the postwar books did more than just "show some leg." They reflected a new sense of women's role in society, a result of the expanded responsibilities women had faced on the home front while so many men were overseas. As "Rosie the Riveter" showed women could take on any task. They could even be heroines—righting wrongs and rescuing "dudes in distress." So the stars of this month's mags not only fought crime, but flashed some gams too. And there was one setting where any charges of immodesty gave way to good sartorial sense: the jungle.

Alex Schomburg spent the war years drawing frenetic and crowded covers of heroes fighting the Axis hordes. So his postwar transition to the less populated jungles was quite a change. And the airbrush coloring he used in the new look was perfect for highlighting wide swaths of bare flesh, which combined with his excellent anatomy into some stunning images.

To lead off with one of the most beautiful covers of the run, *Thrilling* #67 (Aug 1948) shows Princess Pantha facing off in a "bullet versus blade" scene that's as dramatic as it is a showcase for Xela's mastery of the female form. The red parrot is a nice touch as it declares Pantha's intimacy with her surroundings. The "sawed-off" looking branch at the lower left is curious, but perhaps Xela wants us to be aware of the "white man's" intrusions.

The most amazing thing about the 1948-1949 Better revival is that behind the Xela covers lie solid characters and stories with a lot of superb art. The format is "old-fashioned anthology" with

LOOIE... SEEIN' AS HOW AH'M DRESSED FO' A WEDDIN, MEBBE, SINCE PREACHER MC STABLE IS NIGH... YEW'N ME...
ZZZ.. ZZZ.. ZZZZ .ZZZ..
AH THINK SHE STILL LOVES ME! BUT WHUT'S CLARABELLE MAD ABOUT NOW?

The classic Looie Lazybones moment—Clarabel e proposes while Looie dozes! If yew ain't never been to Frazetta's Hogbite Holler—yew gotta go thar (**Thrilling** #67).

superheroes rubbing shoulders with jungle adventure, crime, and teen humor (and occasional cowboys and pirates, and—in two of the four titles—a whole lot of sci-fi)

Pantha's story starts the insides, handsomely drawn by the underappreciated Gene Fawcette. It's a sultry nine-pager of intrigue in India, from the crowded markets of Calcutta to the mysterious mountains outside the city and a secret treasure-laden temple. Next up some hillbilly hijinks delineated by the unsurpassable Frank Frazetta as Looie Lazybones must deal with a wealthy tourist whose fat wallet has turned Clarabelle's (and her pappy's) head. Of course it's an Abner clone, but who has more right to draw such a thing than the man who ghosted the strip for many years?

Then comes the delectable Kathy; here, she too has a fling with a rich boyfriend. But high society life proves somewhat trying as she uncovers a phony "count" out to steal her new flame's "family jewels." Nine pages of fun

The crime yarn that follows is predictable but readable, taking us to the finale: a 12-page Phantom Detective yarn. "Motive for Murder" is a tricky tale in which both hunter and prey adopt disguises. It's a good evocation of the classic pulp hero.

On *Thrilling* #71's (Apr 1949) cover Pantha talks a tiger out of munching an Indian boy, with Xela's airbrush delivering awesome flesh, fur and rock tones Inside, this time Pantha is in the Hawaiian jungle helping a film company make a movie about native life. The story is adequate, and the art (looks like Fawcette again) is luscious. A crime caper that follows, "The Ghost Bandit," is mostly memorable for Ruben Moriera's illustrations.

In a wonderful satire on modern art Kathy develops a taste for abstract painting causing her boyfriend to don the disguise of a French artiste attempting to "oil" his way to her heart. What a delicious moment when Hank's hackwork is hailed as genius by the local women's club! Al Hartley's art captures all with great charm.

Next comes a special treat with what might have been a leftover from sister title *Wonder Comics* which closed out in 1948 It's a spectacular tale of Tara, the Space Gypsy, drawn by the legendary Rafael Astarita, the unsung master of romantic fantasy art. These nine pages are an intoxicating brew. Do not drive a motor vehicle after drinking Astarita's wine

Wrapping up an unbelievable art package is another "Fritz" (Frazetta) Looie Lazybones. Clarabelle is the center of attention, in a little red dress that catches her curves, "embedded" in a smooth seven-pager as another rival for her affections comes and goes.

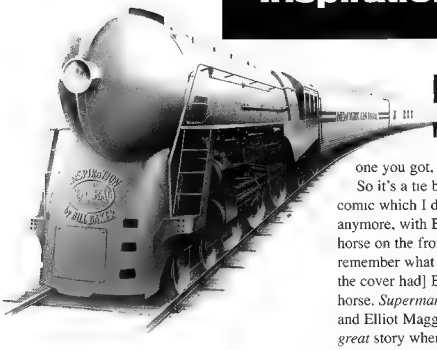
Exciting #57 (Sep 1947) had the first cover to fully utilize Schomburg's new look. This time it's "bullet versus bow" as Judy of the Jungle takes on some tomb looters. Although Schomburg got his new gig right off the git, the interiors took a

[continued on page 80]

Thrilling #71 (Apr 1949), one hopes the tiger will get the message that Pantha means business before blood flows. Each of the five stories inside are drawn by top ta ents, inc uding Frank Frazetta and the obscure but incredible Rafael Astarita.

PRINCESS PANTHA, WATCH OUT!
SHE JUMPS SLICES THE TAUT ROPE!
ONLY CHANCE I'L TO.. CATCH ONE OF THOSE... CLIMBSIDE SHRUBS...
NOW TO CLIMB UP... IF... I CAN...
AIE! YOU WANT TO TASTE THIS KNIFE? THEN COME...
I'M NOT ONLY SMART WIT'S END....

Timo blasts the monster off Robin's back, leading to the classic tableau of space ship, giant spiders and brave souls, in these panels from Rafael Astarita's Tara, who had been the cover-feature for the defunct **Wonder Comics** (**Thrilling** #71).



Dig the New Breed

Mark Millar on his influences and inspirations

He's been widely heralded as a possible new savior of the funny book industry, and vilified as merely a base and crass purveyor of violence with little or no regard for the icons of comics. Whether it's his work on the very controversial The Authority *series for DC/WildStorm, or his more recent updating of Marvel's Mighty Avengers into* The Ultimates, *Millar has no shortage of supporters or detractors. Lost in all of the hullabaloo, unfortunately, is the simple fact that he's one hell of a writer, as capable of scripting a wonderful and moving all-ages tale for one of DC's animated Superman books as he is creating a problematic tale about two pairs of teenagers getting into* Trouble.

However, one thing that's rarely said enough about Mark Millar is that he's someone who is truly passionate about comics, both as an entertainment and an art form. As such, he's widely read in the field, and his appreciation for those who preceded him runs deep. Nowhere is this more apparent than when he's asked to outline his affections concerning the medium and its creators, as the discussion below demonstrates at some length.

Comic Book Marketplace: What was the first comic you remember reading?

Mark Millar: There were three comics that were my "first" comic. I can't remember which one was the first real comic, because the distribution was so odd in the UK that even something that came out two years before another book, you're not sure if that was the first one you got, you know?

So it's a tie between a Batman comic which I don't have anymore, with Batman on a white horse on the front. I don't remember what it was about, [but the cover had] Batman on a white horse. *Superman* by Cary Bates and Elliot Maggin, which was a *great* story where Clark and Superman were split into two different guys—which I have noticed there are eighteen different Superman stories that feature that idea. And the other one was the death of Gwen Stacey, which was reprinted in the UK when I was six.

PHOTO COURTESY RANDY Z NIMERMAN

I have a feeling *that* was the first comic that I ever read, and it's astonishing I got into it, because the lead character, the hero, goes nuts. You know, his girlfriend is murdered by a really scary bad guy, and then the bad guy gets a Goblin glider through his chest, and the police are shooting at the hero, and it's the most *depressing* comic you could ever read! But, somehow, as a six-year-old, I was enchanted by it, and I knew I wanted more of it. So that got me into Spider-Man. I suppose it was quite lucky that it was a classic comic that was my first comic.

CBM: When did you realize that there were people who were actually writing and drawing this stuff for a living?

Millar: Quite quickly, actually. Because I really liked drawing as a kid, and I began to notice that the comics with the artwork that I copied all the time had the same name down in the bottom corner. Guys like…Curt Swan. I was a *huge* Curt Swan fan as a kid, and I used to love his rendition of Superman. I always copied that. So quite quickly I recognized the work of the people who were doing it, and then immediately I started thinking, "Well, if these people are doing it, somebody must be doing this for a living, and I would like to do that." So I think by about eight I was aware of the names of the people on books.

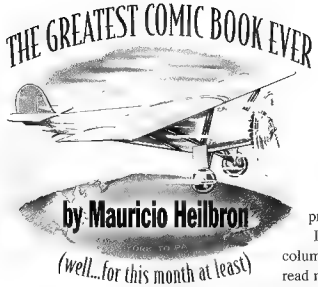
Julie Schwartz was always interesting to me, because it was always like this: "Julie," and that seemed so sexually enticing to me as a kid; I just assumed this was a girl who knew all about Superman like everyone else, probably. And I just thought, "Wow, I'd love to one day to meet Julie Schwartz. That'd be great!" [General laughter] My God, was I disappointed. [More laughter]

CBM: What, he didn't let you sit in his lap? [Yet more laughter] Who were some of the writers who really caught your attention?

Millar: Well, that depends on which phase of my life, I suppose. If I'd read Alan Moore at age six, I would have hated it. It would have been the worst comic I'd ever read. But I read Alan Moore when I was about thirteen, which is the perfect age for it, because you're at that age where you've given up comics. So Alan Moore was the best reason to keep reading. You suddenly thought, "My God, how could I even have considered giving this up? This is wonderful!"

But as a kid, probably Cary Bates and Elliot S! Maggin. Guys like Marv Wolfman. and Denny O'Neil, when I was about ten, as well. Those guys, they were the superstars of their day. They were the Alan Moores before Alan Moore, you know? Gerry Conway I liked as well, but he always gets a real rough deal, which I think is a shame, because he wrote a lot of really good Superman stories, and some good Spider-Man. Even Spider Woman, for God's sake! [General laughter]

[continued on page 76]



Amazing Spider-Man #102

While I most certainly remember the wire rack spinners at the local liquor store or neighborhood 7 11, the old Thrifty Drug store had their comics neatly stacked on the bottom shelf of the magazine section. This section was right up in the front of the store, and I'd sit there, perched on that lower shelf, literally surrounded by comics. I didn't care how long my folks took with their shopping—the longer the better. Eventually, they'd come around and find me with a handful of carefully chosen tomes to take home. I'd inspect dozens of issues, setting the ones that held the most potential off to one side, narrowing it down to whatever limit my mom previously set

Like many of you reading this column, I read, and re-read, and re-re-read my comics. I spent endless hours revisiting comics I knew by heart, inhabiting universes more familiar to me than my own block. They were important to me. They still are.

As if it were yesterday, I remember *Amazing Spider-Man* #102. It was my first Spider-Man comic. It was huge. It was fat. It cost 25 cents—a whole nickel (or dime) more than the rest of the now-seemingly puny books stacked around it. It felt hefty.

The blue bordered cover framed an action scene so vivid I would have sworn it was three dimensional. I could discern from the scrawled signature the name "Gil Kane." Who was this magician? Who was this man whose art *moved*? When compared to the static panels of some of the other books of the time, this was like holding a movie in your hands. His lithe, muscular figures were god-like—anatomic perfection.

This epic had Spider-Man with his extra arms, Morbius the Living Vampire and The Lizard running around, but it wasn't the story I was attracted to although I did memorize the dialogue—it was its length. It was looooong. I was reading a *book*. Every page filled wall-to-wall with this artwork that jumped off the page and swirled around me. My bedroom walls disappeared.

This started my lifelong fascination with Peter Parker and Spider-Man. I bought every one after issue 102. Every single one. With my mom and dad's help, I eventually went back and found the first 101 issues, collecting them one by one until I had his whole story. I knew his life.

Growing up, I couldn't stop. I might have stopped getting *X-Men* for a while, or *Superman*. Or *Fantastic Four*. But not Spidey. Not through college. Not through medical school. Not through residency. Not now. The Spider-Man movie wasn't made for anyone else but me.

I'm the Chairman of the Surgery Department at my hospital, and in the lobby, in a display case that has all the Department Chair photographs, you will not find my face.

Over my name is a glorious black and-white drawing of Spidey.

The scary thing was that that wasn't even my idea.

I read that issue so dang much it fell apart. The things I did to keep that book in one piece would disgust the comic "investor," but the comic "collector" would recognize my work in an instant. Beginning with the futile attempts to re-staple it together and ending with the heavily Scotch-taped spine, there was nothing I didn't try.

{continued on page 76}

Some Very Pinned-up Paper DOLLS

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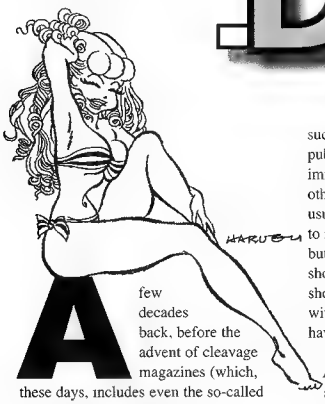
by R.C. Harvey



A few decades back, before the advent of cleavage magazines (which, these days, includes even the so-called "women's magazines," *Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Shape, Elle*, and the like), some inspired editor at athletically inclined *Sports Illustrated* realized that as the nation's omnibus sporting magazine it was a complete vacuum on the subject of one of the world's oldest sports. *SI* could not "un"-cover this "indoor sport" as brazenly as another magazine, *Playboy*, did, but it could cover the subject, this genius realized, by leaving it almost uncovered—that is, by running photographs of nubile young women wearing what were coyly called "swimsuits," thus converting the indoor sport (girl groping) into an outdoor sport (girl ogling).

The result of this editor's inspiration was the "Swimsuit Edition" of *Sports Illustrated*, an edition so popular that it became, within the very short space of a single year, an annual event. It was so successful that, taking the usual course of publishing inventiveness, it inspired imitation on a grand scale. Not only did other magazines begin to abandon their usual editorial stance once a year in order to run pictures of beach babes in bikinis, but the newsstand was soon awash in one-shot publications, each ostensibly showing off this year's swimwear (usually without regard to the season it didn't have to be summer, in other words).

It was a watershed publishing event. After decades of publishing pictures of stark-nakedness, near-nakedness re-emerged, triumphant once again. Suggestion, publishers discovered, was sexier than full disclosure, hints and promises better than gynecological detail, winks superior to a bald faced stare. I strenuously suspect that this discovery led, eventually, to cleavage magazines for both sexes, but to pursue that line of investigation would take us far from our usual subject, the funnies.

Under the circumstances, we cannot resist (who, in their right mind, could?) taking advantage of the excuse this beachwear tradition provides for us to conduct our own annual Swimsuit Edition right here under the *Comic Book Marketplace* banner, this time featuring a farrago of femmes from the funnies pages. And we begin with a few from the pens of the "big three," the trio of cartoonists whose efforts set the pace for illustrative adventure strips in the 1930s—Milton Caniff, Alex Raymond and Harold Foster.

Milton Caniff did some short story illustration in the late 1920s while still in Columbus.

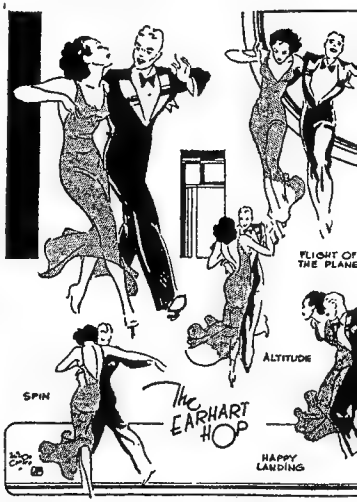
Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls

CANIFF

Damsels in distress are as much a part of the adventuring game as hairy chests and stiff upper lips, a good right hook and fire-breathing dragons. And damsels in distress are, by definition, toothsome in the extreme even though they are not, exactly, in swimsuits. (They're "in distress," tovarich; not "in swimsuits.") As proficient as Caniff was at buckling swashes for his pen-and-ink protagonists, he was, perforce, equally adept at limning the curvaceous gender.

Wherein Mr. Caniff Protests Against the Angular Ladies of Fashion
A PROTEST
NOT THAT IT MATTERS OR THAT ANYONE CARES - BUT WE HAVE A PARTICULAR PEEVE AT THE FASHION DRAWINGS IN THIS, OUR NOBLE SHEET - IT SEEMS THAT SOMEONE HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A HORRIBLE SITUATION BY CREATING THESE STRANGE CREATURES
FOR INSTANCE: IMAGINE IF THESE WOMEN CAME TO LIFE NOW QUEER IT WOULD SEEM TO MAKE LOVE TO SUCH COOLNESS
YOUR EYES
YOUR LIPS
YOUR SKIN - AH WHAT THA - !
ON YOUR KNEES SLAVE!
THESE SLINKING FEMMES IN PAJAMAS - UGH! AS MUCH SEX APPEAL AS THE A / U
IF LADIES WILL WEAR PAJAMAS WE WOULD MUCH PREFER THEM - WELL - MORE THAT WAY
AND THOSE DISPOSSESSIVE BABIES ARE BEREFT OUR CUTE CONSTANTLY - WE ARE GLAD FOR ONE THING THAT WE KNOW NONE OF THEM - THAT OUR FEMININE ACQUAINTANCE IS DELIGHTFULLY LIMITED TO FAR MORE VOLUPTUOUS LADY FRIENDS -

As witness the damsel at the lower right, Caniff, working his way through college on the Columbus **Dispatch**, could draw curvaceous femmes as well as angular fashion plates.



BROTHERS, YE SEEN A NEW PAIR OF CALVES HIKIN' OVER TH' CAMPUS GREEN - SO 'ELP ME!!
NOW, NOW, WINK, THERE AIN'T A GAL IN THIS SCHOOL PINKY AN' ME AIN'T SEEN!!
SINKIN SAILORS THERE SHE IS RIGHT NOW!!
SULP!
E-E-E-E YOW! YOW!
OH, LADY!! YOU BRINGS ME DOWN!!
WELL, BROTHERS, THERE SHE GOES, A FOUR-ALARM BLONDE!
WINK!
WILY HELLO THERE, DORA, DARLING!!
SONIA MY DEAR, WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING HERE?
BIL DWYER
11-22

When he first arrived in New York in the spring of 1932, Caniff helped Bil Dwyer on **Dumb Dora**, drawing the girls (at which Dwyer wasn't nearly as adept)

Caniff seldom drew naked ladies, and when he did, it was usually for some special cartoonist shindig or veteran's event.

Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls

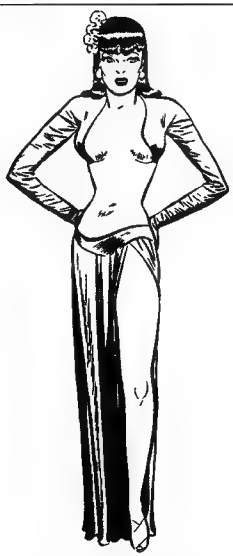
CANIFF

The Dragon Lady and Burma, two of the most formidable felines in the funnies, would, alone, have secured Caniff's place among the more heroic delineators of the distaff side, but he also created Miss Lace, the central figure (so to speak) in a humorous comic strip he manufactured exclusively for military newspapers during World War II. The blonde bombshell Burma, detached from *Terry and the Pirates* for temporary duty as a morale builder in this effort, was the initial heroine, but when the strip was retitled *Male Call* (a name invented by the Camp Newspaper Service for which he drew it), Burma was returned to her regular gig, and Caniff brought in a new heroine, this time a dark-haired beauty.

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES HAVE NEVER MADE CLEAR WHY WARRIORS ARE SAID TO GO FORTH TO BATTLE FOR THE HONOR OF A LADY'S "HAND"!
MILTON CANIFF

The all-time champion Caniff pin-up was, without question, the Dragon Lady.

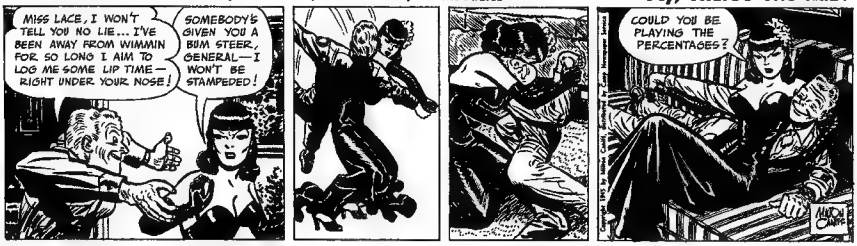
Burma ran the Dragon Lady a close second, and she, not D., starred in a weekly comic strip Caniff did for armed forces newspapers before conjuring up **Male Call** and Miss Lace.



Miss Lace, the central figure (so to speak) of Caniff's contribution to morale among the uniformed. **Male Call**

Male Call by Milton Caniff, creator of "Terry and the Pirates"

Ay, There's The Rub!


MISS LACE, I WON'T TELL YOU NO LIE... I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM WIMMIN FOR SO LONG I AIM TO LOG ME SOME LIP TIME— RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE!
SOMEBODY'S GIVEN YOU A BUM STEER, GENERAL— I WON'T BE STAMPEDED!
COULD YOU BE PLAYING THE PERCENTAGES?
MILTON CANIFF

The general tone of **Male Call** was risqué but not nasty.

Male Call by Milton Caniff, creator of "Terry and the Pirates"

There's A War On, Don't Be A 'No Show'

Dear Miss Lace—
Since you are the only glammer girl most of us guys ever see, we'd appreciate it if you'd show up in real pin-up outfits— You know- like the movie stills.
Dogface Dan
GEE—THAT'S A TOUGHIE...
I CAN'T GO RUNNIN' AROUND WITH THE GENERALS DRESSED LIKE THIS...
THE M.P.s WOULD CHASE ME (PURELY IN LINE OF DUTY, OF COURSE) IF I WORE THIS....
Dear Dan.. I guess you're stuck with me the way I am—Not pinned-up. Approximately yours, Lace

And sometimes, the strip was all pin up.

Steve Canyon, a rugged soldier-of-fortune type, would be surrounded by beauteous types.

STEVE CANYON
MILTON CANIFF
CANYON'S OPERATOR FILLED ME IN BY RADIO . STEVE STILL INSIDE THE DESERT FORT!
IF THE LOCAL COPS CAN'T GET THERE IN TIME WHY SHOULDN'T WE JUST HAVEN TO HIRE SOME AIRPLANES AND JUST HAPPEN TO RIDE OVER THAT WAY?
BE SURE YOU'RE NOT WEARING U.S. ARMY INSIGNIA
MEANWHILE
LEMME SET IN THERE! STEVE MUST BE IN BAD TROUBLE!
YOU KNOW STEVE'S ORDERS... NO WORD TO THE LOCAL COPS/ WE WANT THE SQUIRES TO WIRT AN EASTER EGG IF WE CUT LOOSE!
WHILE WITH N THE FORT
YOU DON'T TRUST ME, MISS. CANYON—ALTHOUGH I SHOT A MAN TO SAVE YOU!
TIME TO TALK ABOUT THAT WHILE THE TRUTH DRIES WEARS OFF OF HAPPY EASTER!
HOW DID YOU GET OUT OF THIS TOWER. IF THEY HAD YOU AND HAPPY ARE IMPRISONED HERE?
OH THE BISBAL FEMININE TRICK, I GOT THE GUARD'S GUN AND KEYS, BUT I HAD TO LEAD YOU BACK HERE TO MISS EASTER!
MUST BE GETTING DARK OUTSIDE!
THE BILLY-BOYS HAVE STOPPED HACKING AT OUR DOOR!
HAPPY'S STILL... SHOOTING OFF THAT TRUTH STUFF...
I ENVY HIM! I FEEL A LITTLE PANT...
OH MISS CANYON, I AM SO TIRED
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT — I - LISTEN!
AIRPLANES! JUST IN TIME!
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, POONUH!

The early **Steve Canyon** featured some pretty daringly sexy women—among them, Madame Lynx, whose neckline attracted criticism from some of Caniff's would-be readers, one of whom sent him this Sunday page with a marginal admonishment.

Caniff usually produced promotional drawings of new characters in the strip, hoping newspapers would use the drawings to advertise a new adventure. This is probably the Duchess of Denver (but I'm not positive) from **Steve Canyon** (c. 1951).

Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls

CANIFF

Although Caniff officially retired Miss Lace in early 1946, he brought her back occasionally to decorate service publications for special events.

STEVE CANYON
MILTON CANIFF
FANCY MY FINE FEATHERED FRIEND SET ON THE BALL! THIS FELLA THINKS IN LIFE ARE MADE ONLY TO PEOPLE WITH MONEY!
FINE FEATHERED ON THE BALL! THIS IN LIFE ARE MADE PEOPLE WITH MONEY!

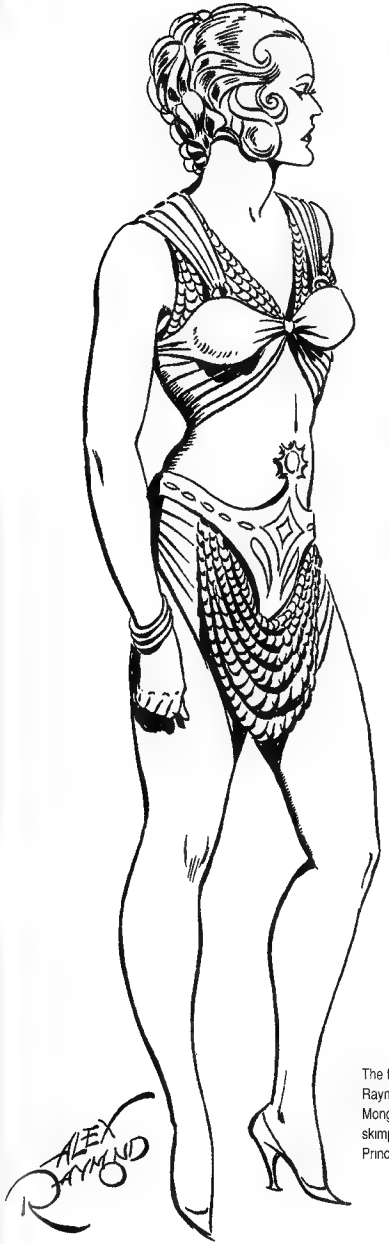
After the success of **Male Call** during the War, Caniff felt that the civilian population, which, after all, included legions of ex-servicemen, was ready for something a little sexier than the pre-war audience. But, as it turned out, he was mistaken. Some papers "adjusted" the décolletage of Fancy's wrap by eliminating part of her anatomy. And Caniff learned his lesson: the civilian population wasn't ready yet, so he raised the necklines on all his heroines and villainesses.

Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls

RAYMOND

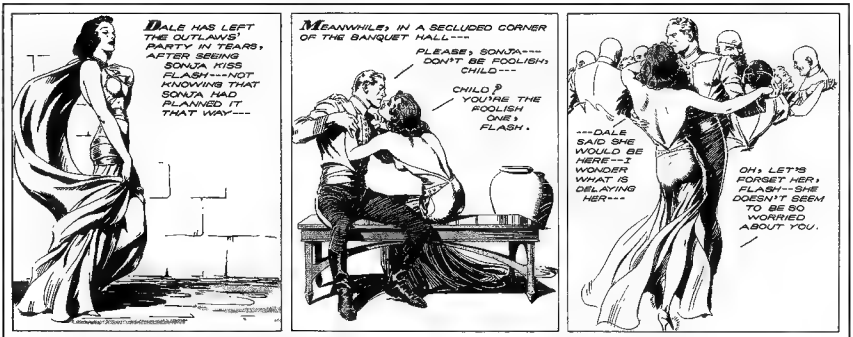
DON'T CRY, DARLING—DON'T YOU SEE? FLASH LEFT BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HIS PRESENCE HERE WOULD CAUSE A WAR BETWEEN BARIN AND MING, MY FATHER—HE LEFT YOU HERE, WHERE YOU'LL BE SAFE—HE'LL BE BACK WITH US SOON—
OH, AURA—IF I CAN'T BE WITH HIM, I DON'T WANT TO BE SAFE—I DON'T WANT TO LIVE!

By 1937, Raymond had learned John LaGatta's technique for rendering clinging gowns.



The female natives of Raymond's planet Mongo wore exotic and skimpy attire, here, Princes Aura.

Raymond was another comic strip artist whose rendering of zaftig ladies was widely enjoyed. He was influenced, at various times, by Franklin Booth (for the futuristic architecture of the planet Mongo in *Flash Gordon*) and John LaGatta (for the architecture of Dale Arden and the other women in Flash) and Matt Clark (chiefly, for the more rugged versions of Flash and Jungle Jim). LaGatta was noted for painting statuesque women elegantly gowned in ways that revealed rather than concealed their embonpoint, and his influence can be seen in Raymond's increasingly sexy renderings of Dale and the other women in the strip, all of whom started wearing exotic and scanty raiment.


DALE HAS LEFT THE OUTLAWS' PARTY IN TEARS, AFTER SEEING SONJA KISS FLASH---NOT KNOWING THAT SONJA HAD PLANNED IT THAT WAY---
MEANWHILE, IN A SECLUDED CORNER OF THE BANQUET HALL---
PLEASE, SONJA--- DON'T BE FOOLISH, CHILD---
CHILD? YOU'RE THE FOOLISH ONE, FLASH.
---DALE SAID SHE WOULD BE HERE---I WONDER WHAT IS DELAYING HER---
OH, LET'S FORGET HER, FLASH---SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

Flash's inamorata Dale supplied Raymond with amp e material.

Some Very Pinned-up
Paper Dolls
RAYMOND

Raymond's women in his later creation, *Rip Kirby*, were equally stunning although they were obliged to wear the less revealing garments of the mid-1950s rather than the futuristic fashions of Mongo. In several photo magazine features about Raymond, he is shown drawing from female models or taking photographs of them for use later. He may have used actual models, I dunno. Articles about Caniff often show him working from models, but he almost never did. He told me that these scenes were staged expressly for the publicity. Newspaper and magazine editors, he said, would much rather print a picture of an old man looking at a pretty girl than of an old man sitting by himself at a drawing board.

Honey Doren, Rip Kirby's girlfriend, gave Raymond's gumshoe strip eye appeal.

Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls FOSTER

Foster claimed his wife was the model for Aleta, Prince Val's forever love.

On occasion, though, if he wanted to get the folds of a trench coat just right or the shadow in minimal lighting, Caniff would photograph his wife, Bunny, and work from the photographs. Foster, too, occasionally employed his wife as a model—most famously, for Prince Valiant's paramour, Aleta. Foster's work is celebrated for his photographic realism and attention to detail as well as, in the case of his women, their facial beauty. But these women had bodies as well as faces, as Foster once testified to in a letter to Caniff.

Some Very Pinned-up Paper Dolls

FOSTER

Writing in a jocular but still genuinely peevish tone, Foster complained of some of the fan letters he received from people whose requests and observations seemed, to him, wholly unreasonable: "Now I can get to my fan mail and tell my dear public: 'No, I don't make drawings for every sap who thinks because he compliments the artist that [I am] under obligations to make him a free painting,' and 'No, I can't send you all the back [pages] of *Prince Valiant* from the beginning,' or 'Sorry Madame, but girls do have breasts and I put them on accordingly. Haven't you got 'em too?'"

Aleta during Val's courtship of her (from the Hastings House book that artfully reprinted the strip in black-and-white excerpted panels).

Aleta's fortune was her face as well as her figure.

Here, in a drawing done for the program of an annual meeting of the National Cartoonists Society, Val and Aleta dig deep to pay the bill for dinner.

Aleta again, from the Hastings House book.

Aleta was not the only fetching woman in **Prince Valiant.**

Drawing "pretty girls" (as they were called before "good girl" came into fashion) is not easy. "Women are always harder to draw then men," Caniff said more than once. One line in the wrong place can change a beautiful face into a plain one. (With portraits of men, on the other hand, errant lines add "character.")

At first, Caniff didn't feel confident drawing pretty girls. Then while working his way through Ohio State University at the *Columbus Dispatch*, he studied the work of Russell Patterson, whose drawings of lithe beauties were then setting the fashion in nationally distributed magazines, and, inspired, Caniff began drawing prettier and prettier girls.

He nonetheless contended for a long time that he couldn't draw women well even while his drawings belied the assertion. Once in the mid-thirties, when such voluptuous paper dolls as the Dragon Lady and Burma undulated from his pen into public view and sent male readers into erotic reveries, an editor friend sent Caniff a disbelieving wire:

"Thought you disliked drawing women," the wire said.

Caniff telegraphed his reply: "Did not draw women years ago because did not know how Have been around some since."

On these pages, a sampling of the rounds he may have had in mind.

A couple for the ages.

John Celardo
The Unsung Hero-Maker

A machine gun-toting ga drawn by Celardo for Tiger Man (**Rangers Comics** #36, Aug 1947). © T. T. Scott/F ction

by Alberto Becattini

*[**Author's Note**. Comics have their own heroes, some of whom do not deserve that title at all, whereas a large number of professionals who have worked in silence, maintaining a high level of quality all along their careers, have been and still are virtually ignored. Comics, that is, have their false myths as well as their unsung heroes. Among the latter, John Celardo is a name that came to our mind, and we decided to interview him for **Comic Book Marketplace**. Unfortunately, John's health conditions prevented him from responding to our questions. At first we thought we'd better give up, but then decided to write the following article, to make John's artistic achievements known to those who have never had a chance to see or appreciate them; as well as to pay homage to a man we do not personally know, but whom we admire for his strength and for his courage. Here's to you, John and thanks to Bob Lubbers for his enlightening insights.]*

Depression Years

John Celardo was born in Staten Island, New York, on December 27, 1918. He attended Port Richmond High School in Staten Island and while there drew his first cartoons for the school newspaper, *The Crow's Nest*. Following the adventures of his favorite comic heroes in the daily comic page and Sunday supplement of the *New York Daily News*, he copied their likenesses and dreamt he would become a comic artist. The four years of art in Port Richmond High were Celardo's whole art background. Those were the Depression Years, and John was not able to accept a scholarship to art school when he graduated in 1936. Instead, he took part in President Roosevelt's National Youth Administration program. Because of his art studies in High School, Celardo was assigned to Barrett Park Zoo (now known as Staten Island Zoo), where he spent many a morning every week sketching animals in watercolor as well as writing down their profiles to make new name plates for their cages. Animals he also portrayed on a few murals, and that certainly would prove to be a useful training ground for his later depiction of wild fauna in "jungle comics."

After a while, Celardo moved to the Work Progress Administration, this time making about $30 a week drawing fossils for the Federal Government. In the meantime, Celardo continued practicing his cartooning (caricaturist Haile Hendrix was an early influence), and in 1937 he managed to sell a few sports cartoons and spot illustrations to Street & Smith Publications, although his ambition

Early Celardo art from Rip Regan, Power Man (**Fight Comics** #5, May 1940). © T. T. Scott/Fiction House.

was to get into the comics field.

Early Comic Efforts

By late 1938, Celardo had created his own super-hero, *Powerman*, making him the protagonist of a ten- or twelve-page story. Someone suggested that he bring it up to the Eisner-Iger Studio, located on Madison Avenue and 40th Street in Manhattan. Headed by writer/artist Will Eisner and by entrepreneur Samuel Maxwell "Jerry" Iger, the studio was supplying such publishers as Fox, Quality and Fiction House with comic book scripts and art. Not only was Celardo's *Powerman* bought by Eisner-Iger, but they also offered him a job on staff. The twenty-year-old artist started his comics career by doing backgrounds for most of the talented draftsmen who worked in the bullpen, including Bernard Baily, Dick Briefer, Lou Fine, Gill Fox, Mort Meskin and Bob Powell. It was from working with these talented people that Celardo learned most of the tricks of the trade, and soon afterwards he graduated to drawing his own comic book stories. He did several strips for Quality Publications, like Wonder Boy and Paul Bunyan in *National Comics*, Samar and Doll Man in *Feature Comics*, and Espionage in *Smash Comics*, but he also contributed to the Fiction House titles with such strips as Rip Regan and Power Man in *Fight Comics*, Don Granval in *Planet Comics*, and The Hawk (previously known as Hawks of the Seas) in *Jumbo Comics*.

One of the people working for Eisner-Iger when Celardo was on staff there was the son of pulp-magazine and comic publisher Thurman T. Scott, who owned Fiction House. No longer willing to depend exclusively on Eisner-Iger for his comic book output, Scott intended to form his own in-house staff, and his son's working at Eisner-Iger was most likely a way to have a first-hand look at how comics business should be managed. Sometime in 1940, some of the artists in what is now called the Iger Studio (Eisner had since dissolved his partnership with Iger to set up his own studio) were asked to join the newly-formed Fiction House art staff, which they did. One of the first artists to make that move was Gene Fawcette, who happened to be Arch Robinson's stepson (Robinson was T. T. Scott's salesman), and who became the first art director at Fiction House. Soon afterwards, Celardo was lured away from Eisner-Iger, and after joining the Fiction House staff on Eighth Avenue, he continued drawing some of the series he had previously worked on, adding others such as Shark Brodie (in *Fight Comics*), The Red Comet (in *Planet Comics*), Clipper Kirk (in *Wings Comics*), and Kaänga (in *Jungle Comics*). Alas, that would not last long, as in February 1941 Celardo was drafted, and he was to remain in the Army for five years, eventually becoming an infantry company Captain with one hundred men under his command.

Back to Fiction House

Having been discharged in early 1946, Celardo was finally able to go back to civilian life—and to comics. Companies had to take

Great Kaänga splash page from **Jungle Comics** #87 (Mar 1947). © T. T. Scott/Fiction House.

Sweetheart WANTED
I WAS UNBELIEVABLY HAPPY WITH THE LOVE PHIL HAD BROUGHT TO MY HEART... FOR IT HAD BEEN BROKEN WHEN THE MAN I WAS TO MARRY DIED IN KOREA, BUT PHIL WAS A PRISONER OF A SHADOW THAT HAUNTED HIS PAST, AND KEPT TURNING HIM AWAY FROM ME. MUST BOTH OF US BE LOSERS BECAUSE OF SAD YESTERDAYS?
WHY DID I COME HERE? WHY DID I FACE THIS JOB? I CANNOT ESCAPE FROM MYSELF!
SORRY YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE JOINING US TONIGHT ELAINE. LOOK, CHUCKIE, SOMEBODY WHO WON'T BE DOWN TO YOUR TABLE.
THAT'S THIS JOB IS WAITRESS AT SCRATCH AND NOPAIN'S HOLIDAY ATMOSPHERE AND THE CHANGE WOULD REVITALIZE MY INTEREST IN LIFE BUT
DON'T LET MARGE AND THANKS ANYWAY
BUT DON'T YOU FOOD'S GOOD JUST BRING ME WHAT EVEN CARE FOR A MENU, SIR. LOOKS GOOD TO YOU!
YEAH. I'LL HAVE THE MANHATTAN SCHIZOPHRENIC PATE DE SOIR, THE
HOW STRANGE HE WAS, AS IF OUT OF FROM THE LIFE ABOUT HIM. AS THOUGH HIS THOUGHTS REMAINED DEEP WITHIN. HIS MOTHER CHATTERED THROUGHOUT THE MEAL. AFTER WORK, ON THE WAY TO THE SUBWAY,

A blond beauty from the opening page of a romance story published by the American Comics Group in the early 1950s. © ACG.

Tarzan
by Edgar Rice Burroughs
Returning to the rain forest he loves, Tarzan once again feels free...
Gnawing hunger drives him to the hunt...
The joy of a large African moon fills Tarzan, making sleep impossible...
Suddenly...
The spell is broken!
Strange sounds send him scurrying through the trees...
Then...
At the jungle's edge, a strange sight greets his eyes...
Stampeding steers of the Ankole tribe!...
They're heading straight for the village!...
But what can Tarzan do?
John Celardo
3-5-1878

March 5, 1967 **Tarzan** Sunday page. Written, drawn and lettered by John Celardo. © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc./United Features Syndicate.

people back when they returned from the service, and Celardo got back his staff job in the Fiction House office, now located in a building at 53rd and Fifth. Most of the artists who had been there in 1941 were now gone, so that few of the current staffers even knew Celardo's name. There were now about twenty people on the Fiction House staff, which included general manager Malcom (Mal) Reiss, editor Jack Byrne, writer John Mitchell, and artists Bob Lubbers (who was also the new art director), Nick Cardy, George Tuska, Art Saaf, Murphy Anderson, Lily Renée and Fran Hopper, among others. T. T. Scott, who had previously commuted to Manhattan from his house in Long Island, had since moved to Georgia, where he continued to manage both the business and creative sides of his publishing house mostly by phone. Celardo's second stint at Fiction House once again saw him tackling different genres, drawing such strips as Suicide Smith (in *Wings Comics*), Tiger Man (in *Rangers Comics*), and Captain Terry Thunder (in *Jungle Comics*).

Yet Celardo's best work from this period is undoubtedly to be found in the several stories and covers he did for *Jungle Comics* which featured Kaänga, a character he had already drawn in 1940-41. Several other excellent artists, including Reed Crandall, Rubén Moreira and George Tuska, had drawn this blond Tarzan-like jungle lord, yet the stories Celardo illustrated from 1946 48 were the best ones, characterized by his impeccable anatomies and by his careful renditions of the African flora and fauna. Besides that, his depiction of Kaänga's girlfriend Ann, ever threatened by assorted wild animals or savages, was at the same time elegant and alluring, as he masterfully delineated her curvy body and legs according to Fiction House's "good girl art" trademark.

The years spent at Fiction House are among those Celardo remembers most fondly, as the atmosphere in the bullpen couldn't have been friendlier. The artists would often get together even after working hours, and Celardo was particularly close to Bob Lubbers—a friendship which lasts to this day.

Freelancing Years

By early 1948, Fiction House started down-sizing and a few months later the Fiction House art staff was disbanded, although Scott and his associates would continue publishing comic books for another six years. Like other former staffers, Celardo continued to draw stories for them for a while on a freelance basis. Celardo, Lubbers and Stan Drake (then an advertising artist, who later made it big in the newspaper comics field with *The Heart of Juliet Jones*) decided to share a studio in town, and rented an office on the eighth floor of a building at 545 Fifth Avenue. That happened to be the same floor where publisher Archer St. John had his offices, so that Celardo and

Lubbers began free-lancing for his comic book titles. "Johnny and I picked some good jobs there," Bob Lubbers remembers. "We had a small 'reception' area big enough to house the water cooler we bought on our first day, the hottest of the summer, when a bottled-water salesman, 300 pounds and dripping like a small brook, made an easy sale. We set up desks in the big room and got to work. There was a Horn & Hardart Automat in the sub-street level. Coffee was a nickel, lunch five nickels, and dinner 11 nickels."

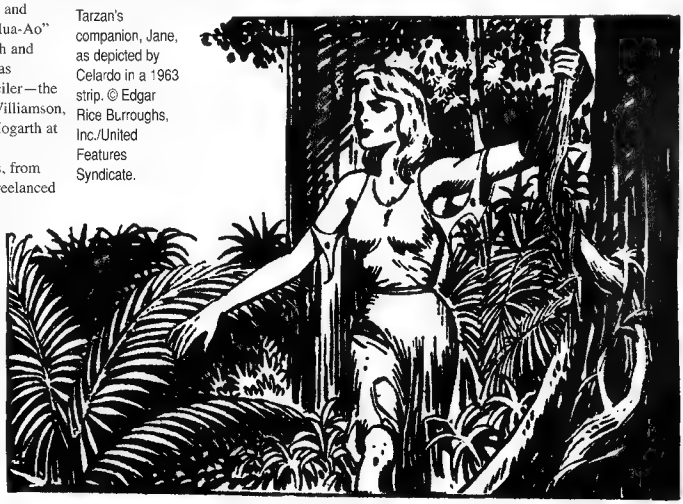
One of Celardo's first assignments after leaving the Fiction House staff was helping out Burne Hogarth on *Tarzan*. During 1948, Celardo penciled eight months' worth of *Tarzan* Sunday pages, at a time when Hogarth was busy organizing the courses at the School of Visual Arts, which he had co-founded with Silas Rhodes a year before. Hogarth probably turned to Celardo on account of the excellent work he had done on Kaänga. Although it is hard to spot Celardo's style under Hogarth's distinctive inking, Celardo was probably involved in the production of a good deal of the "Tarzan and N'Ani" and "Tarzan on the Island of Mua-Ao" continuities between March and October, 1948, when he was succeeded by another penciler—the young and promising Al Williamson, who was studying under Hogarth at that time.

Regarding comic books, from 1948 until 1953 Celardo freelanced art for St. John, Better/Standard, American Comics Group, Hillman, and Ziff-Davis. Once again, he tackled all the then-popular genres, yet his best output from this period can be found in the romance titles he did for Standard and ACG (which featured a whole lot of beautiful girls) and in such western titles as *Billy West* (a Standard comic where he drew the titular character and other back-up features).

The Celardo-Drake-Lubbers studio dissolved in mid-1950, when Lubbers signed a contract with United Features to draw the *Tarzan* dailies and Sundays. From then until late 1953, Celardo continued freelancing comic book stories from home.

Lord of the Jungle

When Bob Lubbers started a new strip with Al Capp (*Long Sam*, likewise distributed by United Features), he asked Celardo if he would like to try out to take over *Tarzan*. Celardo showed his samples to United Features, which accepted them, and he started drawing the strip as of December, 1953 (his first daily appearing on January 11, 1954, followed by his first Sunday on February 21). During the first seven years of drawing the *Tarzan* strip, Celardo worked on scripts by Dick Van Buren (1954-58) and then Bill LaVarre (aka "Bill Elliott", 1958-60). Late in 1960, he took over the scripts as well, continuing to write, draw and letter the strip all by himself until November 1967.

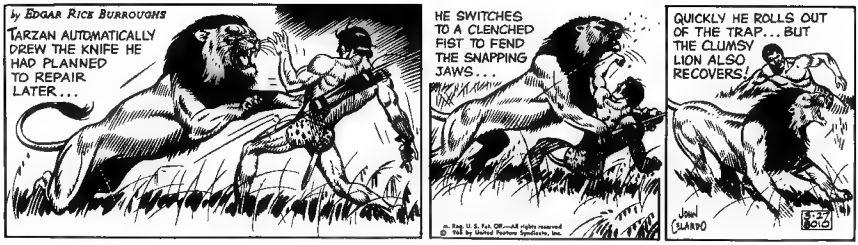


Tarzan's companion, Jane, as depicted by Celardo in a 1963 strip. © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc./United Features Syndicate.

Celardo's was the second-longest stint on the *Tarzan* dailies after Rex Maxon's (Maxon had drawn them from 1929-36 and again from 1938-47), and his contribution to the Lord of the Jungle's *mythos* should not be underestimated. Whereas in later years there was a bit of stiffness in his depiction of characters, Celardo always did a highly-professional, accurate job on the strip. Perhaps Celardo's *Tarzan* did not have Hal Foster's "wild grace" or Burne Hogarth's "baroque tension," but his design was solid, and his storytelling was skilful. In fact, although he had had no writing credits before *Tarzan*, Celardo had done storyboards and contributed plots back in his Eisner-Iger Studio days.

Although the production of the *Tarzan* strip almost totally absorbed him for 14 years, Celardo sometimes found the time to do other jobs. In 1959, he contributed illustrations to the *Picture World Encyclopedia*, and in 1961 he apparently inked a story for DC Comics' *Girls' Love Stories*.

The reason why Celardo finally left *Tarzan* in late 1967 was that the Edgar Rice Burroughs executives asked all


by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS
TARZAN AUTOMATICALLY DREW THE KNIFE HE HAD PLANNED TO REPAIR LATER...
HE SWITCHES TO A CLENCHED FIST TO FEND THE SNAPPING JAWS...
QUICKLY HE ROLLS OUT OF THE TRAP... BUT THE CLUMSY LION ALSO RECOVERS!
JOHN CELARDO

those who were working on the character to move to Tarzana, California. At that time Celardo's children, John, Jr. and Donna, were still very young. He did not want to leave New York, and neither did his wife Julia. So, after discussing with her the pros and cons of leaving *Tarzan*, he made a decision and quit the strip, going back to freelancing. His last *Tarzan* daily appeared on December 9, 1967, followed by his last Sunday on January 7, 1968. Russ Manning, who had previously drawn the *Tarzan* comic books for Gold Key/Western, succeeded him on both.

While working on *Tarzan*, Celardo had become a member of the National Cartoonists Society, and later joined the Artists and Writers' Association. Besides taking part in meetings and socializing with the other comic writers and artists, he would often show his prowess at golf. As Bob Lubbers recalls, "John is a natural athlete and his great golf swing, feel for the game, and his mind control enabled him to become a low handicap golfer. He played at LaTourette Golf Course on Staten Island and we played for years, with Stan [Drake] many times, at most of the metropolitan NYC, Long Island and Westchester golf club courses, and annually at Fred Waring's Shawnee in Pennsylvania. Those were the golden years for us all."

HERE'S PLENTY OF PENNY ANTE HOODS IN THIS BURG! ONE OF 'EM'S GOTTA KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT DAD!
AND I'M GONNA KEEP FLATTENING FACES TILL I GET THE INFORMATION I'M AFTER!

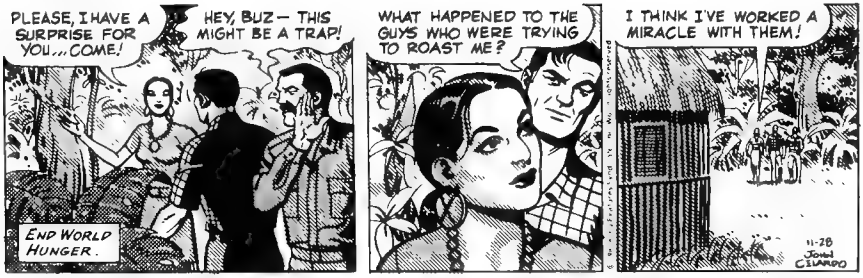
Beautiful splash page from **Hawk and Dove** #6 (Jun/Jul 1969). Penciled by Gil Kane, inked by Celardo. © DC Comics.

Not Only Comics

Shortly after he had left *Tarzan*, Celardo got a profitable account with Topps, illustrating bubble gum packages and several card sets about sports. At the same time, he got in touch with Western Publishing, which was then publishing its comic book titles under the Gold Key imprint. From 1967-82, Celardo drew numerous stories for Western's "weird" titles – *Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, *Grimm's Ghost Stories* and *Shroud of Mystery* For Western's subsidiary company, Whitman, he also illustrated "The Cheaters," a *Grimm's Ghost Stories* tale by Laura French which was published in the popular *Big Little Book* series in 1976. Whereas at Western Celardo usually penciled and inked, DC Comics utilized him mostly as an inker on a wide number of titles. During 1968-71, he did the finishes on such titles as *Beware the Creeper*, *The Witching Hour*, *The House of Mystery* and *Heart Throbs*, also penciling a few romance stories. In 1971, Celardo also drew The Butterfly origin story for the first issue of Skywald Publishing's short-lived comics magazine, *Hell-Rider*.

The years 1968-69 once

BUZ SAWYER® **By John Celardo**


PLEASE, I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU...COME!
HEY, BUZ— THIS MIGHT BE A TRAP!
END WORLD HUNGER.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GUYS WHO WERE TRYING TO ROAST ME?
I THINK I'VE WORKED A MIRACLE WITH THEM!
11-28
JOHN CELARDO

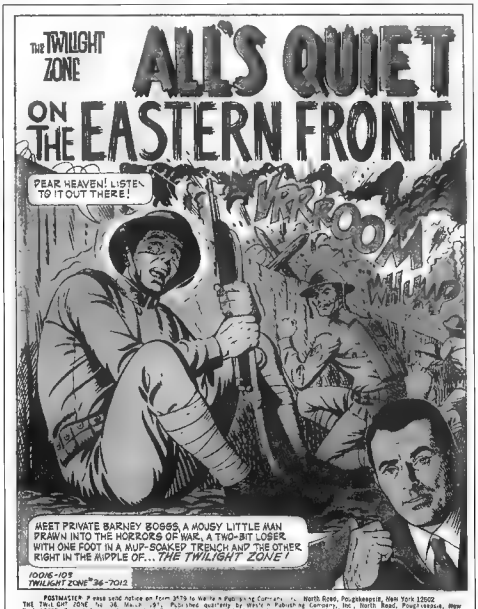
again saw him at work on syndicated strips. In January 1968, he took over the *Tales of the Green Beret* dailies and Sundays for The Chicago Tribune after Joe Kubert had left them to start up his cartooning school project. Unfortunately, the strip did not last much longer. Based on Robin Moore's best selling novel about the Vietnam War, it grew more and more unpopular, and eventually folded in May 1968. Five months later, Al McWilliams stopped drawing *Davy Jones*, and United Features asked Celardo to temporarily replace him. That did not last long either. By early 1969, the maritime adventure strip (a daily only) was no longer being drawn by Celardo, but by an uncredited artist (perhaps writer Sam Leff himself, perhaps Tony Tallarico) before former *Superman* artist Wayne Boring took it over in March that same year.

The Editor, the Artist

It was in 1972 that Celardo got a call from King Features Syndicate asking him to join the staff as a comics editor. Celardo hesitated for a while, as he had never been an editor before, but King wanted him on account of his experience as a writer/artist. Celardo finally accepted the job in 1973, and after a while both King and he understood they had made the right choice. Working with an associate editor, Celardo checked every single comic strip and page which was coming in from a great number of artists. His job consisted in checking art as well as grammar, spelling and dates. And sometimes he had to make corrections himself, as deadlines were too tight to send the faulty strips back to the artist. Concerning deadline problems, Celardo couldn't say "no" when a fellow artist occasionally asked him to help out on a batch of strips. That happened, for instance, in 1974, when Celardo inked two weeks of *Big Ben Bolt* for John Cullen Murphy, and in 1977, when he ghosted on *Secret Agent Corrigan* for Al Williamson for a whole month.

From 1977-82, on his own time at home, Celardo went back to freelancing comic book art for DC Comics. Once again, he was usually embellishing other artists' pencils in his distinctive inking style His best efforts from this period can be found

[continued on page 62]


THE TWILIGHT ZONE
ALL'S QUIET ON THE EASTERN FRONT
DEAR HEAVEN! LISTEN TO IT OUT THERE!
MEET PRIVATE BARNEY BOGGS, A MOUSY LITTLE MAN DRAWN INTO THE HORRORS OF WAR, A TWO-BIT LOSER WITH ONE FOOT IN A MUD-SOAKED TRENCH AND THE OTHER RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF... THE TWILIGHT ZONE!
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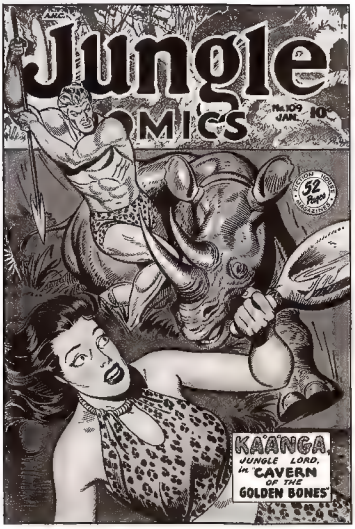
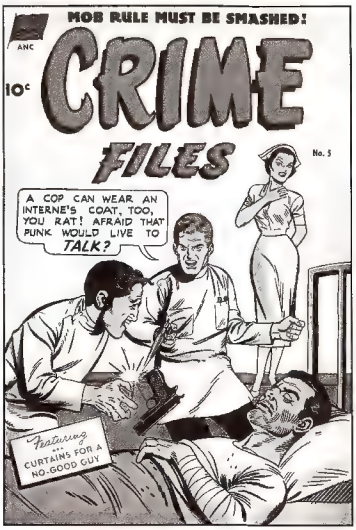
Splash page from **The Twilight Zone** #36 (Mar 1971), penciled and inked by Celardo, featuring series creator Rod Serling. © Cayuga Productions, Inc.

John Celardo

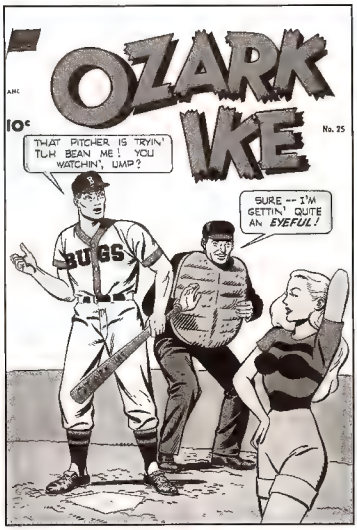


Jungle Comics #109 (Jan 1949). © T. T. Scott/Fiction House.

Jungle Comics #110 (Feb 1949). © T. T. Scott/Fiction House



Crime Files #5 (Sep 1952). © Standard Publications



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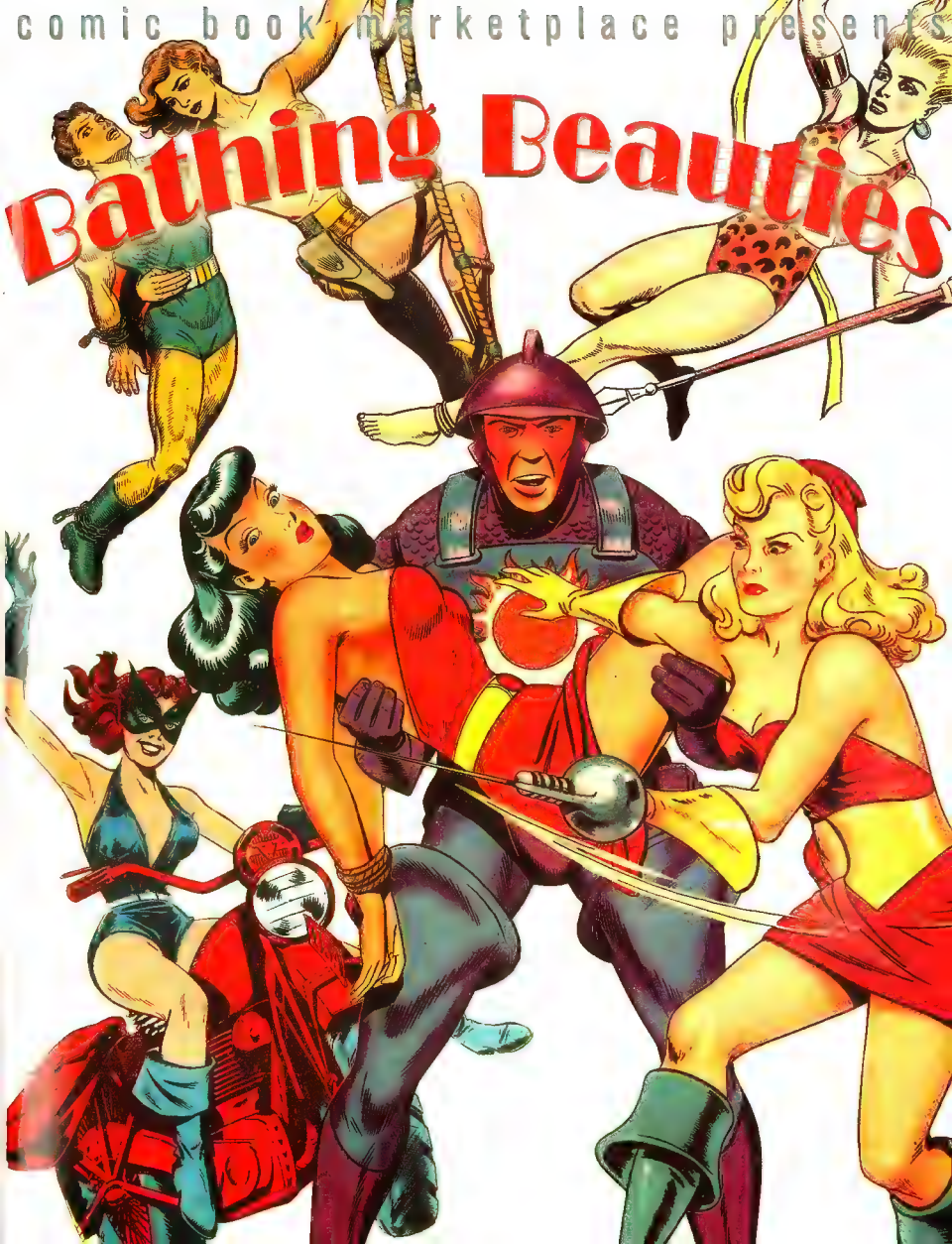
comic book marketplace presents

Bathing Beauties



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52 Pages
sea adventures in
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eerie mystery in
GHOST GALLERY

A History of

by Ron Goulart

Although the phrase "Good Girl Art" didn't come into use among comic collectors and dealers until thirty or so years ago, the phenomenon existed almost from the beginning of the funny book business in the 1930s. Keep in mind that the term refers not to magazines that contain drawings of good girls but rather those featuring good drawings of pretty young women. These pretty young women are most often scantily or provocatively clad. Before scrutinizing the contents of Golden Age comic books for examples, we'll judge some books by their covers.

Many of the earliest regularly issued comic books in the United States were devoted to reprinting newspaper comic strips and pages. The customers for such titles as *Famous Funnies*, *Popular Comics* and *Super Comics* were presumed to be children and the magazines were packaged and promoted accordingly. On the first two years of *Famous* covers, for example, you'll find only four young women depicted and all of them sedately presented. On its first two dozen covers *Popular* showed just one young woman, although Little Orphan Annie popped up thirteen times. *Super's* only adult cover girl during its first two years was Winnie Winkle, who appeared on three of its 24 covers. Annie made it onto three of those, too.

Major Malcolm Wheeler Nicholson's pioneering original material comic book *New Fun* (later *More Fun*) made its debut late in 1934. Only one young woman is to be seen on the magazine's first two dozen covers. She may, however, be the very first pretty girl in jeopardy

Good Girl Art

ever depicted on the front of a comic book. The economical Major recycled an interior page of Clemens Gretter's *Don Drake on the Planet Saro* as his cover for the third issue and readers were thus provided with several panels showing Don's blonde lady friend being menaced by tentacled aliens. Major Nicholson's next comic book was *New Comics* (later *New Adventure*, finally just plain *Adventure*). The first 24 covers didn't feature any women at all.

By the late 1930s more and more publishers, many of them already turning out pulp fiction magazines, were jumping into the comic book business. And some of them came eventually to realize that a large portion of the audience for this new newsstand product was made up of adolescent boys or boys on the brink of adolescence. This inspired publishers and editors in a different way. The more sedate, such as Detective Comics, Inc. (successor to Major Nicholson's outfit), added more adolescent boy characters and this resulted in the advent of Robin the Boy Wonder and dozens of similarly inclined lads. *Detective Comics*, by the way, never showed a woman on its covers in its first two years. In fact, there is only one young woman in evidence on the first 100 covers. Other publishers, most notably Fiction House, chose to feature sparsely clad young women on the front of their comic books, confident that pubescent boys are interested in looking at such objects. They also made certain that there were plentiful supplies of provocative women inside their magazines as well.

One of the founding fathers of Good Girl Art was Samuel Maxwell Iger, known to his friends as Jerry. A onetime

JUMBO COMICS
No.99
MAY
10¢
SHEENA, JUNGLE QUEEN in "SHRINE of the SEVEN SOULS"
Also Ghost Gallery - The Hawk

PLANET
COMICS
No. 39
NOV.
10¢
Death-Webs at Zenith 3/
Featuring
MYSTA of the Moon
also STAR PIRATE-SPACE RANGERS and many others.

newspaper cartoonist possessed of a very primitive big foot style. Jerry Iger was also a dedicated entrepreneur. In 1937, after editing a short-lived comic book titled *Wow*, he intuited that there was going to be a comic book industry and that publishers, many of them moving into comics from pulps or from girlie magazines, were going to need material. He started a shop to provide that material and was fortunate in getting one of his *Wow* contributors to team up with him. Talented and inventive as both an artist and a writer, Will Eisner was just 20 when he entered into an uneasy partnership with Iger. The earliest and most influential product of the new Eisner-Iger shop was *Jumbo Comics*, which launched Sheena (the Queen of the Jungle) in America

The blonde female Tarzan had originally appeared in an overseas tabloid called *Wags*, packaged by the shop. In 1938, Iger persuaded T.T. Scott, the publisher of the Fiction House line of pulps—*Wings*, *Jungle Stories*, *Fight Stories*, etc.—to go into the comic book trade. The first venture would be *Jumbo*, a tabloid-sized funny book that recycled the *Wags* material. The first issues were able to use the original plates to print from and instead of full color, *Jumbo* simply used different colored paper for its jumbo pages. Initially, Sheena was not the star, but in the second year, after the magazine had wisely shrunk to standard size and she had adopted her leopard skin costume, she was the leading lady. From the 18th issue (Aug 1940) onward no other character ever appeared on a cover.

The writing credit always went to W. Morgan Thomas, a dashing penname coined by Eisner. The initial artist on *Sheena* was Mort Meskin and he was succeeded by Bob Powell, Robert Webb and various volunteers from the bullpen. Eisner, the first to render the jungle queen on a *Jumbo* cover, was followed by Powell, Dan Zolnerowich, Artie Saaf, Nick Cardy and others. Sheena's adventures were pretty much standard jungle story fare, involving her with rampaging savages, evil slave traders, vicious ivory hunters and, after World War II commenced, Nazi invaders. What distinguished her from Tarzan, Ka-Zar and most of the other jungle comic book characters was the fact that she was quite a bit more interesting to look at. Her core audience of adolescent boys was added to appreciably during the War, when thousands of pinup-happy GIs joined the *Jumbo Comics* readership.

Eisner and Iger continued to put together magazines. For Fiction House they came up with *Jungle Comics*, *Planet Comics* and *Wings Comics*. For the more sedate Quality line of Everett "Busy" Arnold it was *Hot Comics*, *Crack Comics*, *National Comics*, etc. In 1940, Eisner left the

shop to establish a studio of his own and turn out, among other features, *The Spirit*. Iger continued alone and from that point the product grew considerably broader and the Good Girl Art style burgeoned. Some of the veterans of the earlier shop continued to work for Iger, among them George Tuska, Bob Powell, Henry Kiefer and Nick Viscardi (later known as Nick Cardy). Iger also recruited a disparate stable of new artists. Listed as editor of all the Fiction House comic books, he hired young men like Robert Webb, Matt Baker and Jack Kamen and women like Lily Renee and Fran Hopper.

Late in 1939, Fiction House added *Jungle Comics* to its roster. The star of this new title was Kaanga, a blond Tarzan impersonator. His mate, who shared most of his woodland adventures was a dark-haired young lady named Ann. She wore a two-piece leopard skin outfit and the majority of other females on view in this particular stretch of jungle weren't noted for overdressing. The scripts were credited to the alias Frank Riddell and the artists over the years included Tuska, Zolnerowich, John Celardo, Reed Crandall, Ruben Moreira and Maurice Whitman. Two of them, Moreira and Celardo, went on to draw the *Tarzan* newspaper strip.

Jungle was also the home of Camilla, who, after a few false starts, developed into a successful Sheena surrogate. Also a blonde, and billed as the Queen of the Jungle Empire, she wore a skimpy zebra skin outfit rather than the traditional leopard-spotted garb. Most of the other features in the magazine, including "Tabu," "Fantomah" and "Wambi the Jungle Boy," managed to include young women wearing a minimum of clothing.

Late in 1939, Fiction House introduced two other new titles, *Planet Comics* and *Fight Comics*. *Planet* was the first comic book devoted exclusively to science fiction. All but three of its covers during its 73-issue run featured attractive young women not overly burdened with clothes. Since the youths who plunked down their dimes for *Planet* were science fiction fans as well, the covers also pictured bug-eyed alien creatures, stalwart spacemen blasting away with rayguns and an abundance of rocket ships and futuristic locales.

In addition to such SF concepts as space travel and star wars, the magazine provided recurring heroes. These included Flint Baker, Spurt Hammond, The Red Comet and Planet Payson. Gale Allen came aboard in the fourth issue. She was in charge of a battalion of female

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WONDER
COMICS
No. 13
Schomburg

FEATURING THE ADVENTURES OF TARA, PIRATE QUEEN!

WONDER COMICS

10¢

No. 20

rocket pilots known as the Girl Patrol and then as the Girl Squadron. In her early adventures, Gale was rather demurely outfitted in tunic, riding britches and boots. Gradually, however, she started shedding clothes. Eventually the regulation Girl Squadron uniform consisted of metal bra, shorts and gun belt.

As the 1940s progressed, the art and editorial content of *Planet* placed increasing emphasis on the female form and new lady stars were added. Mysta of the Moon, also known as a "*queen of science*," made her debut in #36 and Futura followed in #43. "The Lost World" began in the November 1942 issue and dealt with a future Earth after it had been brutally invaded by the "slaughter-mad warriors of Volta." These unhandsome green Voltans were unashamedly nasty and behaved in an even worse fashion than the Nazis they were based on. Though the hero of the feature was a husky chap named Hunt Bowman, most eyes were on his girl companion, a nearly-naked blonde named Lyssa. "The Lost World" was drawn by Cardy, George Evans and Lily Renee at various times.

The major cover artist for *Planet* was pulp veteran Joe Doolin, who drew over three dozen. Zolnerowich was the second most prolific cover artist, drawing all but one of the covers from January of 1941 through July of 1943. *Planet Comics* continued until the winter of 1953, a citadel of Good Girl Art until the very end.

Launched at the same time as its sci-fi sister, *Fight Comics* initially devoted itself to action and adventure, with an occasional prize fight yarn thrown in. The magazine introduced a low-key superhero known as Power Man in the third issue and a Captain America surrogate, called Super-American, in the 15th (Oct 1941). Toward the end of that year, women began to figure prominently on *Fight* covers. In 1942, after America officially entered the War, women were often seen, with skirts hiked, being threatened or tortured by Japanese soldiers. Both Doolin and Zolnerowich drew covers.

Senorita Rio was introduced in the 19th issue (Jun 1942), billed as both the "bewitching American secret agent" and "America's lovely daring spy ace." In her initial outing she appeared in a skintight scarlet evening gown, a bathing suit and her underwear. Unhampered by all the costume changes, she thwarted a Brazil based Nazi spy ring in a mere eight pages. She was a crack shot and also good in hand-to-hand combat against both men and women. Her daredevil escapades were

hardly hampered by the fact that the scriptwriters were laboring under the impression that the language spoken in Brazil was Spanish and not Portuguese. The first artist was Nick Cardy, who did an excellent job and devoted as much care to the backgrounds and props as he did to the lady spy's figure and wardrobe. He was followed by Artie Saaf and then Lily Renee.

Fight Comics #32 (Jun 1944) introduced Tiger Girl, another Sheena simulacrum who wore a two-piece tiger skin bathing suit. Also known as Princess Vishnu, she resided in a hidden temple and looked after the people and animals in her part of India. The artist was Matt Baker, who would become one of the most successful and prolific practitioners of Good Girl art in the postwar period. None of the tigers that the princess hung out with seemed to resent the fact that she'd had to skin one of their brothers to make her scanty costume.

Begun as *Rangers of Freedom* by Fiction House in 1941, by the eighth issue it was simply *Ranger Comics*. Glory Forbes, an adventuress along the lines of Senorita Rio, was one of the leading characters. George Tuska frequently illustrated her adventures and changes of clothes. The eventual star of *Rangers* made her debut in #21 (Feb 1945). Billed as a "Frontier Queen" and the "Flame Girl of the Wild West," Firehair was a redheaded heroine who operated in a sort of Hollywood version of the Old West. Like many a character in Western novels and cowboy movies, Firehair had been raised by Indians after the death of her parents. Adopted by the Dakota tribe that took her in, she remained with them after reaching maturity. Clad in a brief buckskin dress, she acted as a champion of her adopted people and helped them in battle against the continuous stream of predatory white men who sought to murder, cheat, rob and take advantage of them. All the scripts were attributed to the house name of John Starr. Lee Elias, later to work on the exemplary Good Girl Art heroine Black Cat, was the first artist. When he moved on, the talented Bob Lubbers took over.

Wings Comics, its name inspired by that of Fiction House's successful aviation pulp, also appeared on the stands in 1940. It initially concentrated on flying and fully-clothed air heroes. Its lone feature starring a female—"Jane Martin, War Nurse"—was quite sedate in its earliest months. Among the other characters were Clipper Kirk, the Skull Squad, Greasemonkey Griffin and Captain Wings. Scripts were credited to a staff of fictitious writers such as Major T.E Bowen, Ace Atkins and Capt. Derek West. Early artists, real people all, included Klaus Nordling, Arthur Peddy, George Tuska and Al Avison.

When Iger's shop became the

sole provider of content, Good Girl Art began to appear in *Wings*. Saaf and Cardy became contributors. Bob Lubbers, who worked directly for Fiction House, was also providing art. Like the other new additions, Lubbers could draw both airplanes and pretty women. Hiked skirts and cleavage were now as frequently seen as propellers and machine guns. Ladies started playing important roles in just about every story. Jane Martin took to showing up in provocative attire and, on occasion, in her undies. The postwar years found *Wings* in an especially girl-crazy mood. Every monthly cover from the spring of 1947 to the fall of 1949 featured a pretty, and usually scantily dressed, young woman. There was also, to be sure, at least one airplane on every cover. Lubbers drew all 28 of these catchy covers.

MLJ, another outfit that jumped into comic books after publishing pulp fiction, began introducing its new line in 1939. The first four titles were *Blue Ribbon Comics*, *Top-Notch Comics*, *Pep Comics* and *Zip Comics*. At the offset the quartet was on the dull side, using mostly clunky artwork and incoherent scripts from the Harry "A" Chesler sweatshop. There were superheroes to be sure, the Wizard in *Top-Notch*, Steel Sterling in *Zip* and the first super-patriot, the Shield in *Pep*. The advent of World War II and the efforts of artist-writer Charles Biro and editor Abner Sundell seem to be responsible for MLJ's leap into the Good Girl genre.

Biro was a second-rate artist, but he was extremely good at packaging comic book material and hooking readers. *Crime Does Not Pay*, which he co-edited and helped cook up in 1942, eventually changed the comic book business. He'd joined Chesler in the middle 1930s and became manager of the art shop. He specialized back then in drawing whimsical fillers built around cute little kids with drop-seat pajamas. Eventually, however, his hardboiled side emerged and he began drawing more realistic stuff—tough service men and, then, audacious superheroes. He was lured over to MLJ early on and took over the art department. Sundell, like Biro, also came from Chesler and moved over to MLJ soon after Biro. He edited titles and also contributed scripts. It was these two who chiefly changed the look and content of the magazines.

If you judge these books by their covers, *Zip* was the first to venture into Good Girl Art territory. Biro's Steel Sterling was the star superhero and he drew the ground breaking covers. Commencing with the third issue (Apr 1940), *Zip* made women an important element of the cover design. In the true pulp tradition, these young women usually wore low-cut dresses and hiked skirts and were either tied up, manacled, restrained with straps or some combination of the above. Most months a sparsely clad and endangered female was saved from a fate worse—and certainly more bizarre—than death by

Sterling's zipping to the rescue.

Pep Comics also changed, inside and out. The Shield, teamed with his own boy wonder Dusty, commenced meeting up with increasingly bloodthirsty villains. There was the vicious green-tinted Vulture, a Nazi called the Strangler, an even more rotten Japanese known as the Fang and, worst of all, the Hun, who even succeeded in temporarily knocking off the Shield. With all this going on artist Irv Novick—sometimes with penciling help from Pierce Rice—was adding plenty of Good Girl Art touches. Upthrust bosoms, bondage, stocking tops, torture, etc.

The most unsettling lady to show up in *Pep* arrived in #16 (Jun 1941). Her name was Madam Satan and she worked for the Devil himself. She was a dark-haired, sultry lady, an updated version of the heartless vamp who haunted the movies in the years between the two World Wars and a forerunner of the destructive femme fatale of 1940s film noir. An early caption explained her origin—"The Devil searched far and long for an ally to wreak havoc amongst mortals…Then the black, corrupt soul of a beautiful woman, a victim of her own fiendish plan on Earth, left its bodily habitation to stand before the king of Purgatory…and his search was at an end…the Devil had found himself a fitting mate."

Using the name Iola, occupying her curvaceous body once again and donning a slinky black evening gown, Madam Satan insinuated herself into various lives and set out to corrupt as many men as possible. A typical victim, Carl Jensen, was lured away from his true love and was soon "completely in the toils of the creature of the netherworld, beginning a mad and expensive orgy of merrymaking." All too soon Carl was goaded into a life of crime. "Shower me with real gifts! Expensive ones!" Iola urged her bedazzled victim. "Steal if you must!" After beating up his own father and shooting his fiancée, Carl came to his senses. He saw Iola as she truly was, her face a grinning, green skull.

Undaunted, Iola next tried to convince the townspeople of a quiet New England village that a new bride who suffered from catalepsy was actually a vampire. This sequence, which stretched over two issues, was rich with both sexy and gruesome images. Readers witnessed Iola turning into a vampire bat, sucking blood from a golden-haired tot, one of her minions being impaled on the stake meant for the innocent bride. Add to these the many shots of Madam Satan in her low-cut crimson gown and the cataleptic newlywed wearing her flimsy nightgown and you got a pretty heady mixture.

Although Iola never quite succeeded in shipping an innocent soul to Hell, she did manage to cause an awful lot of death and destruction in the six issues in which she hung

continued on page 58

ARCHIE ADVENTURE SERIES
ADVENTURES OF
THE FLY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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NOV.
ONE DAY, THE STRANGEST AND MOST POWERFUL ENEMY THE FLY HAS YET BATTLED TURNS OUT TO BE A BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHOSE IDENTITY IS STEEPED IN FRIGHTENING MYSTERY! LEARN HER MYSTERIOUS SECRET AS...
The Fly meets the Cat Girl

Paper Tigress

by Will Murray

When I think back to the most exciting women of the Silver Age of Comics, I have to admit it was a pretty short list. Those were Comics Code days. Boys and girls had to dress properly and behave within the narrow restrictions of their time. Not a lot of skin to be seen. Sex kittens were almost unheard of.

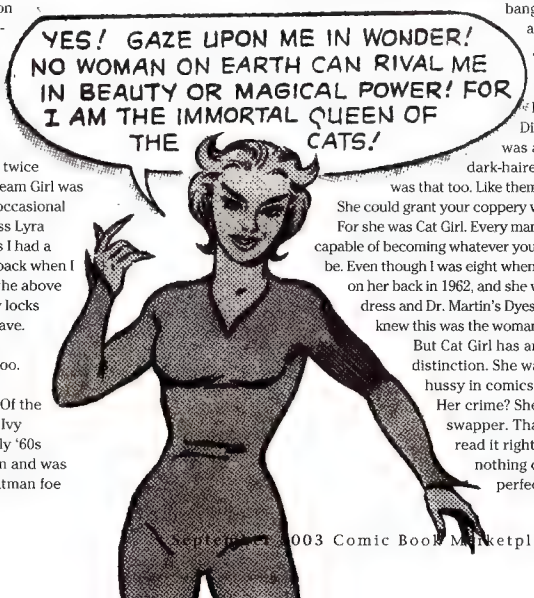
I never cared much for Supergirl (too girl next door) or Wonder Woman, (too womanly). Hawkgirl left me pretty cold (women with wings don't exactly lift my kite). Sue Storm was taken. Although the Wasp was kind of cute, she had eyes only for Ant-Man.

I suppose it all depends on your taste in two-dimensional chicks. But back then it was much more exciting on the bad girl side of the street. Thor's Enchantress was pretty hot. I had a yen for the Silver Ladies from Venus, whom Captain Atom twice tangled with. Superboy's Dream Girl was intriguing. But Superman's occasional paramour Kryptonian actress Lyra Lerroll was really hot. Guess I had a thing for platinum blondes back when I was 10 or 11, since most of the above were known for their silvery locks Come to think of it, I must have. Metal Men's lovesick robot, Platinum, caught my fancy too.

Batman juggled both Catwoman and Poison Ivy. Of the two, I must confess Poison Ivy scratched my itch. The early '60s Catwoman was seldom seen and was really Batwoman, whom Batman foe Catman was forever trying to remodel in his own feline image. Whether as Batwoman or Catwoman, she wasn't much to look at in her prim and proper yellow-and-red costume. Batgirl wasn't much better.

Around 1966, they revived and revamped the original Catwoman. She looked pretty curvy in green spandex, clutching a suggestive cat o' nine tails whip, as Carmine Infantino drew her. Nevertheless, I once came across the pre-Code Catwoman in her regal '40s-style purple robes. For some reason, I found that edition provocatively purr fect. And I was a dog person.

But of all the femme fatales of the Silver Age, one stood above all the rest. The bad girl to end all bad girls. She had everything. Dig blondes? She was a blonde. Prefer dark-haired beauties? She was that too. Like them auburn haired? She could grant your coppery wish.



For she was Cat Girl. Every man's dream, capable of becoming whatever you wanted her to be. Even though I was eight when I first laid eyes on her back in 1962, and she wore only a paper dress and Dr. Martin's Dyes, I instinctively knew this was the woman for me.

But Cat Girl has an even greater distinction. She was the biggest hussy in comics up to that time. Her crime? She was a hero swapper. That's right. You read it right. She thought nothing of abandoning a perfectly good

THE FLY
FOOL YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE INSISTED ME, NOW YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE THIS CAVE ALIVE!
ONE NIGHT AT THE CAPITOL CITY ZOO, AS THE ZOO-KEEPER MAKES HIS ROUNDS!
OH! GOOD LORD! ONE OF THE BIG CATS MUST'VE BROKEN LOOSE!
BUT AN INSTANT LATER...
GOOD YOU'RE HERE, MR. FLY! I WAS TAKING A SHORT CUT ACROSS THE PARK AND...
WHY, IT'S A PANTHER! I'M A MASCOT! BACK FOR THE TIME TWISS YOU AND ME KORRED FOR A SECOND!
I THOUGHT ONE OF MY CATS HAD ESCAPED! I'D NEVER DREAM THAT A PRETTY GIRL, DRESSED IN A COSTUME, WOULD BE WALKING AROUND.
ONE DAY, THE STRANGEST AND MOST POWERFUL ENEMY THE FLY HAS YET BATTLED TURNS OUT TO BE A BEAUTIFUL GIRL, WHOSE IDENTITY IS STEEPED IN PRIMITIVE MYSTERY! LEARN HER MYSTERIOUS SECRET AS...
The Fly meets the Cat Girl

THE NEXT INSTANT, AS THE ZOO-KEEPER LUNGES FORWARD DESPERATELY...
HELP—HELP! AN ESCAPED LUNATIC IS SETTING THE CATS FREE!
I MUST WORK FAST IF MY FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS ARE TO ENJOY FREEDOM!
SHORTLY, INSIDE THE LION HOUSE...
THEY SENSE WHO I AM...AND WHAT I'M DOING! IN A MINUTE, EVERY CAGE WILL BE OPEN!
QUICK, MY FRIENDS! ESCAPE WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE! SCATTER IN ALL DIRECTIONS!
CONTINUED 2

nemesis in favor of another one who caught her feline eye.

The story of the fickle Cat Girl began before my time, in collecting terms, that is. She first materialized in "The Fly Meets Cat Girl" (*The Adventures of the Fly* #9) back in 1960.

When a strange girl in a tawny catsuit releases the jungle felines from Capitol City's zoo, lawyer Thomas Troy rubs his magic ring and becomes the Fly. Rounding up assorted lions and tigers, he incurs the wrath of the mysterious Cat Girl, who swears vengeance. Until the Fly saves her from a nasty fall, that is.

Temporarily trucing, the duo retires to Cat Girl's cave where she abruptly turns on him again, vowing never to leave the city until he solves the riddle of her existence. Using her mysterious command over cats, Cat Girl sics various wildcats on him. The Fly's firefly radiance stampedes the big cats, during which Cat Girl is thrown to all fours in a posture the Fly immediately recognizes.

"You're the *Sphinx*!" he accuses. "The cat goddess of old Egypt...who has the body of a lioness and the face of a beautiful woman! According to mythology you're supposed to live forever!"

Exposed, Cat Girl takes off, leaving the Fly to realize he has a new recurring foe.

Evidently, the Archie Comics editors had long-range plans for Cat Girl. They promised her return for the next issue—and there she was in "The Statue of Gold!"

In Cairo at the invitation of the Adventurer's Club, the Fly falls into a trap. His hosts demand that he lead them to the fabled Statue of Gold. On the way, they encounter Cat Girl, leading two obedient black leopards. She commands her pets to rescue the Fly, then demands to know where the Statue of Gold is, too. But the Fly doesn't know. Turns out the whole thing is a hoax within a hoax. Summoning a plague of locusts, the Fly drives off Cat Girl's leopards. Cat Girl slinks off.

BUT SHE DOES MAKE A FASCINATING ENEMY! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL GIRL... I MEAN, ER... CREATURE SHE IS! STRANGE TO SAY, I LOOK FORWARD TO OUR NEXT MEETING!
LOOK FOR ANOTHER EXCITING DUEL BETWEEN THE WINGED BATTLER AND THE CAT-GIRL IN THE NEXT SMASH HIT ISSUE OF... THE FLY!

At the end Cat Girl stands alone before a

Golden Sphinx which she guards, saying "You exist even as *I* exist...the original *Sphinx*, the riddle of the universe which perhaps *the Fly* will some day solve."

But it was not meant to be. The Fly never got his chance. Maybe it was because artist John Guinta was replaced next issue. Perhaps the Fly's new partner-in-peril Fly-Girl meant Cat Girl just wasn't needed any more.

When introduced, Cat Girl was no sex goddess. Her face was a little too alien, her hair vaguely Persian, and her outfit was not particularly fetching with its long cat tail. Maybe Fly readers didn't care for her either, since she vanished from the pages of *The Fly* after "The Statue of Gold."

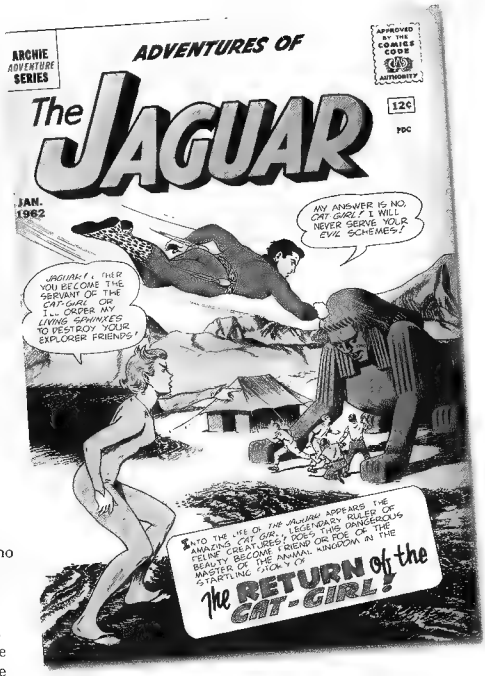
In the interim, new artist John Rosenberger took over the Fly, giving it a polished DC-style look. Sales must have improved because in the fall of 1961, Rosenberger, with Fly scripter and Cat Girl creator Robert Bernstein, re-teamed for a companion title, *The Adventures of the Jaguar.*

A feline spin on the Fly, zoologist Ralph Hardy discovers an Incan jaguar belt and is magically transformed into the master of the animal kingdom, the Jaguar. If you think about it, the concept is simply Cat Girl writ masculine.

It was probably inevitable that the Jaguar would encounter Cat Girl. They were made for each other. Except back in those early Silver Age days, crossovers were virtually unheard of. And the number of villains who drifted into other strips very rare. Boy Commandos' nemesis Crazy Quilt once popped up in the Robin strip, and the original Daredevil's implacable foe, the Claw, dropped in on Rocky X of the Rocketeers in *Boy Comics.* But that was back in the Golden Age. Cat Girl might have gotten the idea from an earlier criminal catgirl called the Huntress. She crossed over from the Wildcat strip to vex the Justice Society of America during a period when Wildcat was conveniently on vacation from the JSA.

So when the cover to *Jaguar* #4 (Jan 1962) showed our jaguar-fur-trimmed red hero battling Cat Girl and her living sphinxes, it marked comics history in the making.

This was the same Cat Girl the Fly battled. Her catsuit was

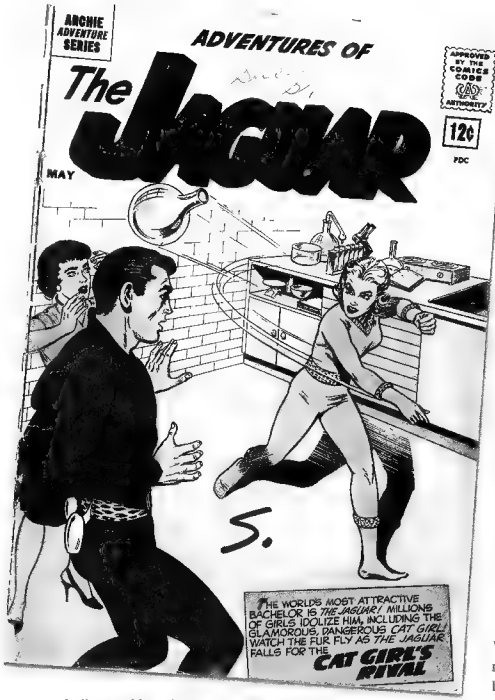

ARCHIE ADVENTURE SERIES
ADVENTURES OF
The JAGUAR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
12¢
PDC
JAN. 1962
MY ANSWER IS NO, CAT GIRL! I WILL NEVER SERVE YOUR EVIL SCHEMES!
JAGUAR! ... THEN YOU BECOME THE SERVANT OF THE CAT-GIRL OR I... CRUSH MY LIVING SPHINXES TO DESTROY YOUR EXPLORER FRIENDS!
INTO THE LIFE OF THE JAGUAR APPEARS THE AMAZING CAT GIRL, LEGENDARY RULER OF FELINE CREATURES! DOES THIS DANGEROUS BEAUTY BECOME FRIEND OR FOE OF THE MASTER OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM IN THE STARTLING STORY OF
The RETURN of the CAT-GIRL!

three shades darker, her hair more tawny orange, and she's shed that ridiculous twitchy tail, but it's unmistakably the immortal Sphinx in female form. The story was titled "The Return of Cat Girl," which may have puzzled Jaguar fans who never read *The Fly.*

While exploring Egypt's Valley of the Sphinxes, Ralph Hardy and an archaeological team are attacked by Cat Girl and her living sphinx statues. When she spies the Jaguar in action, it's not exactly love at first sight, but a thirst for raw domination. Insisting the Jaguar become her slave or take the consequences, Cat Girl is stupefied when the Jaguar instead handily pulverizes her stone sphinxes into rubble.

INSTANTS LATER ..
IT'S THE JAGUAR!
SINCE SPHINXES ARE PART ANIMAL, I'LL TRY GIVING THEM TELEPATHIC ORDERS!
BUT DISAPPOINTING MOMENTS AFTER...
GROWR!
THEY DON'T OBEY! IT MUST BE BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T ORIGINALLY LIVING CREATURES!
LISTEN, JAGUAR- YOUR POWERS ARE USELESS AGAINST MINE!

The tale takes a left turn into weirdness when Cat Girl and the bewildered archeologists abruptly vanish. They've been whisked to another dimension of—get this—2-D *bears* upset with Cat Girl for attacking their perceived lord and master. Yes, the Jaguar. Turns out he's the master


ARCHIE ADVENTURE SERIES
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MAY
THE WORLD'S MOST ATTRACTIVE BACHELOR IS THE JAGUAR! MILLIONS OF GIRLS IDOLIZE HIM, INCLUDING THE GLAMOROUS, DANGEROUS CAT GIRL! WATCH THE FUR FLY AS THE JAGUAR FALLS FOR THE CAT GIRL'S RIVAL

of *all* animal kingdoms.

After being rescued, a semi-grateful Cat Girl plants a kiss on the Jaguar's mouth and, typically, promises future antagonism. Gotta love that superchick attitude.

Once more writer Robert Bernstein was setting up for future conflicts. Once again, it took only one issue for Cat Girl to resurface.

"The Jaguar's Future Wife" finds the Jaguar a prisoner of Tola, Queen of the planet Skaxia. Tola wants him to be her king and husband. Before he can react to the bizarre proposal, a giant lion attacks, scattering Tola and her blue aliens back to the safety of Outer Space.

When the lion mutates into a refurbished Cat Girl—now a pert blonde in a beige outfit—the Jaguar's even more stunned when she tells him Cat Girl has once again changed her spots.

"You see, dear Jaguar—I'm determined that only *I* shall marry you!"

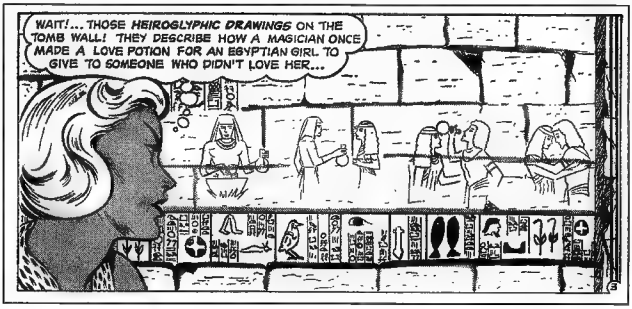
As she vanishes, our hero smacks his whirling head, thinking, "Wow! Cat Girl loves me! Now I *really* have a problem on my hands!"

Watching the issues unfold, you can guess that editorial thinking here was to transform the Jaguar into a kind of Superman clone. But the inspiration for Cat Girl seems straight out of the '40s, and the days when Batman tangled with the good-bad Catwoman, who was sometimes a crook and other times a reformed crook, but forever infatuated with the Caped Crusader. Catwoman had been exiled from the pages of *Batman* in 1954 on the grounds that she was too slinky, sexy for the mavens of the new Comics Code. So the field was clear for a new queen of the cats.

"The Cat Girl's Rival" dominates *Jaguar* #6. It's really more of a Cat Girl story. It starts off with her brooding and mooning over the Jaguar. By now her lion-hued catsuit is set off by white leopard-fur neck and cuff adornments. Scheming to make him fall in love with her, Cat Girl daydreams feeding him an ancient Egyptian love potion—only to have the Jaguar fall for Ralph Hardy's new secretary, Jill Ross, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the 1962 edition of Lois Lane, right down to the perky working girl hairdo.

Turns out it was a dream or hallucination. Or was it? When Cat Girl flies off to spy on Ralph invisibly, there *is* a new secretary named Jill Ross. Well, Cat Girl boasted of being an immortal sorceress. Being psychic must go with the territory.

Accosting the object of her desire, Cat Girl suggests they join forces. The Jaguar nobly refuses. Stung, she blames Jill Ross and promises vengeance. But the Jaguar warns her back.


WAIT!... THOSE HEIROGLYPHIC DRAWINGS ON THE TOMB WALL! THEY DESCRIBE HOW A MAGICIAN ONCE MADE A LOVE POTION FOR AN EGYPTIAN GIRL TO GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T LOVE HER...

OWW!
SUDDENLY...
THAT LOVE POTION MUST AROUSE LOVE ONLY FOR ME! YOU'RE MARRYING ME, YOU BRUTE!
T-THE JAGUAR HAS VANISHED! WAIT! I'M STILL IN THE TOMB! I--I MUST HAVE DREAMED EVERYTHING! YES!, IT SAYS HERE THAT THE MINER MUST AVOID INHALING THE FUMES AS THEY CAUSE HALLUCINATIONS!
AS FOR YOU, YOU MONSTER, I HATE YOU! HOW DARE YOU LOOK AT ANOTHER GIRL, EVEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF A LOVE POTION?
WHAT A RELIEF! THEN THAT GIRL WAS ONLY A PRODUCT OF MY IMAGINATION! I'LL FLY TO HIS LABORATORY!
SECONDS LATER, AT RALPH HARDY'S LABORATORY
ALL RIGHT, MISS ROSS! TAKE A LETTER!
SHE'S HERE--THE GIRL IN MY HALLUCINATION! ONLY SHE'S REAL! AND IS NOW IN RALPH HARDY'S LIFE! GREAT, HE IS, WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Realizing she's been too evil for her own good, Cat Girl thinks, "I must make drastic changes in myself! I hate this costume...the way I look! I'll use my magic to transform myself into a beautiful, irresistible woman!"

Using her Egyptian sorcery, she transforms herself once again. Now tricked out in a cute blue miniskirt set off by a tiger-skin blouse and boots, her blonde hair darkens to an appropriately tawny hue, replete with girlish ponytail.

"Now I'm as gorgeous as *Cleopatra*—a fit rival for Jill Ross!" she tells herself.

That was my introduction to Cat Girl. For this is where I came in. I must admit I thought then as now that Cat Girl was a little crazy. She looked far more fetching in womanly lion skins. The new outfit wasn't necessarily an improvement. Either way, she could run rings around Jill Ross. She was a super sex kitten in all senses of the term. I wanted her from Day One.

Summoning two winged monsters from Egypt's past to seize the Jaguar and carry him off to her lair, Cat Girl is shocked when they instead attack the Jaguar, not obeying his or her telepathic commands. The story really takes some bizarre twists as Kree-Nal, the green-skinned Sea Circe he met back in issue #3 (think Superman's mermaid girlfriend, Lori Lemaris) intervenes to zap the monsters into tiny weak editions of themselves. By the end of the story, Jill Ross, Kree-Nal and Cat Girl are all in love with the Jaguar, with Cat Girl forlornly realizing her plans have once more backfired. She's now a distant third on his hit parade.

From this point onward, the Jaguar becomes a weird version of the Archie, Betty and Veronica triangle with three potential girlfriends, not merely two. It also smacks of the Superman/Lois Lane/Lana Lang shenanigans of that era, too. Everyone wanted to marry the Man of Steel back then. Matrimonial urges seem to drive every woman the Jaguar encounters. Well, he *is* technically an animal.

Issue #7: "The Jaguar is Missing!" When the Jaguar fails to return from fighting mole creatures deep underground, a worried Jill Ross, Cat Girl and Kree-Nal team up to find him. Instead, they battle assorted menaces normally handled by the Jaguar. In the end, he pops up after hiding in plain sight to announce it was all just a test of what he calls his new Jaguar Rescue Team.

Cat Girl now sports a becoming white tiger-skin tunic. And she seems more agreeable than mischievous. But in next issue's "Jaguar's Sixth Sense," she's back to her wicked wily ways, meddling in the Jaguar's battle with a defrosted metallic robot somebody found in the far North. Jealous of Jill Ross, she

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I MUST FIND THE JAGUAR BUT I FEAR THE WORST HAS HAPPENED!
OF COURSE YOU WILL, KREE-NAL! HE'S ONLY MISSING!
NO! HE CAN'T BE DEAD! I'M SURE I'LL FIND HIM!

IT'S INCREDIBLE! THEY'VE BECOME TINY HARMLESS RABBITS AND SQUIRRELS—THE OPPOSITE OF THEIR FEROCIOUS SELVES!
BUT WE RAPIDED FOR THE JAGUAR! WHY DIDN'T YOU COME INSTEAD?
BECAUSE HE WASN'T AROUND! SO I HANDLED THIS EMERGENCY! RARE-WELL, GENTLEMEN! GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE!
BACK AT THE LAB...
TO ANSWER ANOTHER CALL FOR THE JAGUAR! A GANG OF THIEVES IS ROBBING THE HOME OF A MILLIONAIRE SPORTSMAN!
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED! BUT CAT-GIRL IS VANISHED! WHERE IS SHE GOING, JILL?
SECONDS LATER...
SOME BIG GAME HUNTER, YOU ARE, CHUM! YOU CAN SHOOT ASS STUFF JONS AND TIGERS— BUT YOU CAN'T STOP A SIMPLE HOLDUP!
SOME BIG GAME HUNTER, YOU ARE, CHUM! YOU CAN SHOOT ASS STUFF JONS AND TIGERS— BUT YOU CAN'T STOP A SIMPLE HOLDUP!
BUT I CAN! AND WHO SAID THE BIG GAME COULDN'T BE UNSTUFFED?
T-THE CATS! THEY'RE COMIN' ALIVE!
YES— THANKS TO MY POWERS OF SORCERY! I M CAT-GIRL, QUEEN OF ALL CATS, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE! IF YOU'LL SURRENDER, MY FOUR-LEGGED SUBJECTS WON'T HARM YOU!
RRR!

thinks, "He's bound to grow fonder of Jill as time goes on! He might even marry her! As for me, he thinks of *Cat-Girl* as a sorceress without human feelings!" Can't have that Even if her behavior proves it.

Using magic to inhibit the Jaguar's animal superpowers to render him helpless, Cat Girl intends to step in, save the day and impress the spots off him. But once again, her low scheme backfires, Lois Lane-style. In a twist, Jill Ross figures out how to defeat the creature.

Invisibly watching the two embrace, Cat Girl frets, "Drat! Where is *my* sense? My scheme only made The Jaguar care *more* for *Jill Ross*!"

In #9's "The Jaguar's Last Stand," he's unexpectedly defeated by Mineral-Man, a steel-stealing alien who looks suspiciously like the rampaging robot from the previous issue. Jill sends out a telepathic message to Cat Girl and Kree-Nal. Together they defeat the alien and save their shared beloved. The competitive spirit seems to have deserted them.

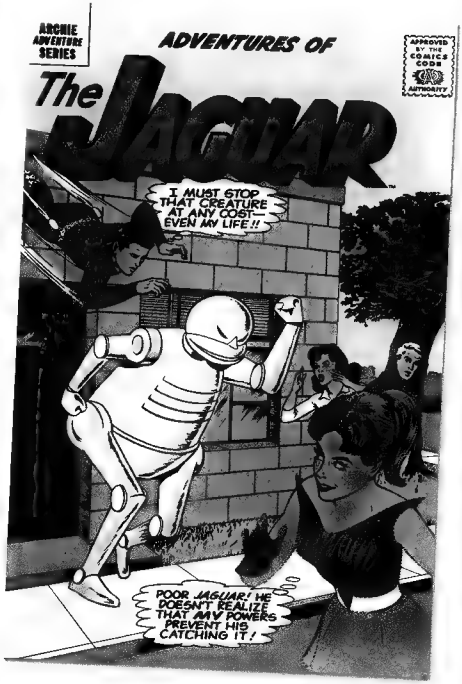
Now in heroic circles, you're supposed to do the saving, not be the saved. But the Jaguar doesn't seem to mind. His Rescue Team has saved his pelt. And he seems cool with all the female attention—as long as he doesn't have to make a commitment.

Cat Girl seemed popular with readers. Some wanted her to marry the Jaguar. Others thought she deserved her own magazine. She must have boosted sales, yet *The Adventures of the Jaguar* soon decreases frequency slightly, from seven to five times a year. Simultaneously, Cat Girl drops out. She's nowhere to be seen in #10-12.

Instead, the focus is on Jill Ross, who tumbled to the Jaguar's true identity many issues before. (Not that it's a great leap in logic. Ralph's mustache disappears when he becomes the Jaguar; otherwise they're identical.) In "The Girl Who Knew Too Much" Jill's secret knowledge comes out and Ralph has to figure out what to do with her. And he does. Induced selective amnesia wipes the problem of Jill Ross clean.

At first, issue #13's "The Birth of the Cat Gang" seems to have nothing to do with Cat Girl. But it's clearly a series turning point as Jill Ross decides to quit Ralph Hardy's employ to become a nurse, planning to return to work in that capacity. It appears that she's being written out of the series.

This causes Ralph to relive the discovery of the magic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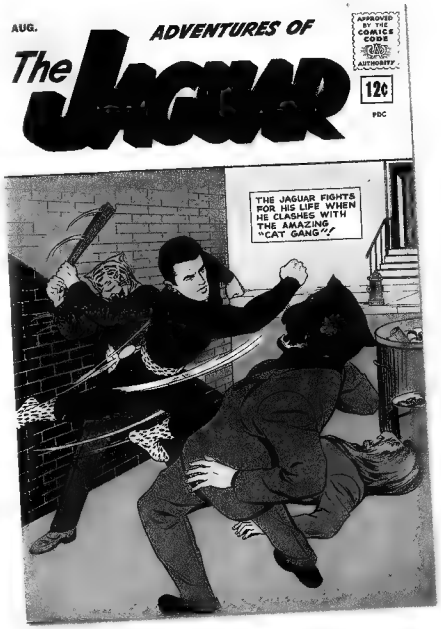
I MUST STOP THAT CREATURE AT ANY COST— EVEN MY LIFE!!
POOR JAGUAR! HE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT MY POWERS PREVENT HIS CATCHING IT!



"IT ALL STEMMED FROM THOSE NUCLEAR TESTS! THE ACCUMULATION OF STRONTIUM 90 FROM THOSE EXPLOSIONS AFFECTED NOBODY ON EARTH EXCEPT ME!"
"HOW DREADFUL IT WAS WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT ATOMIC RADIATION HAD ROBBED ME OF MY OCCULT POWERS! I COULDN'T TRAVEL INTO THE PAST...I COULDN'T EVEN FLY!"
"IT TOOK SIX MONTHS FOR MY BROKEN ARM AND LEG TO HEAL! NOW I SUFFERED BECAUSE ONLY ONE POWER REMAINED TO ME--MY CONTROL OVER CATS..."
"I'M STILL QUEEN OF ALL LIVING FELINES, BUT MY OTHER POWERS HAD VANISHED FOREVER...INCLUDING KNOWLEDGE OF THE SECRET IDENTITY..."
"...OF THE JAGUAR! I'M STILL CRAZY ABOUT HIM, BUT I CANNOT RECALL HIS CIVILIAN IDENTITY. "
"BUT SOMEDAY WE SHALL MEET. I MUST MAKE THE JAGUAR FALL IN LOVE WITH ME! WITHOUT THE ONLY MAN I CAN LOVE, LIFE IS MEANINGLESS!"

jaguar belt which enables him to become the Jaguar. Idly, he wonders whatever happened to Cat Girl? Seems she's been missing a while in Jaguar-time.

The story shifts to slinky, sultry raven-haired heiress, Lydia Fellin. She doesn't look familiar, but it's Cat Girl in yet another hot sex goddess incarnation.

Although she now catnaps in a luxury apartment, things have not gone well for the lady sphinx. Turns out Strontium 90 from nuclear testing has robbed her of all her magical powers except telepathic control over the cat kingdom. Rosenberger draws a brief flashback of the old pony-tailed Cat Girl dropping out of the sky and, one arm in a cast, recuperating under the care of a faithful leopard. So perished the classic Cat Girl.

Meanwhile, a trio of jewel thieves calling themselves the Cat Gang—they wear tiger and lion heads over ordinary business suits—are robbing city apartments. The Jaguar is after them.

On patrol, the Jaguar recognizes Cat Girl despite her altered appearance. When he drops in, Lydia professes her undying love. But the Jaguar suspects she's the Cat Gang's secret leader. Well, wouldn't you?

ANY CUNNING I NOW POSSESS I SHALL USE TO WIN YOUR HEART! I'M STILL MADLY IN LOVE WITH YOU, JAGUAR!
YOU'RE VERY ATTRACTIVE, CAT GIRL, BUT...

"You fool!" Lydia rages. "You have the keenest eyesight...yet you cannot see into my *heart*!"

Using her jewel collection, Lydia sets a trap for the Cat Gang, who fall for it like tabbies scenting cream and catnip. Via her command of cats, Cat Girl alerts the Jaguar, who corrals the Cat Gang so easily you'd think they were a mere plot device—which they were. This is all about romance.

In the end, the Jaguar and Lydia come to an understanding.

"Now do you believe my nature has *changed*?" she asks. "That I'm not up to any more evil tricks?"

"Yes!" he says. "Now—a grateful toast to...Cat Girl!"

"No, my dear! To my *new* name, Lydia."

Thinking to herself, she adds, "Which fate permitting, may one day be changed again to Mrs. Jaguar."

Sounds to me like the same old Cat Girl under the sleek new skin. But the Jaguar definitely buys her story.

It sure looked like Cat Girl was making progress at last. Jill Ross out of the way. Kree-Nal nowhere in sight. A fresh makeover. A new more serious tone to the series. How could she fail?

YES! NOW-- A GRATEFUL TOAST TO... CAT GIRL!
NO, MY DEAR! TO MY NEW NAME... LYDIA!
WHICH, FATE PERMITTING, MAY ONE DAY BE CHANGED AGAIN TO MRS. JAGUAR!

Mysteriously, matters shift again in the next issue. Jill Ross appears briefly, juggling nursing school and helping Ralph part time.

Bringing a sick cat to Ralph Hardy, Lydia strikes up a friendship. Turns out she's suddenly given up on the Jaguar who she says "detests and distrusts me for reasons I can't mention." Cryptically, she adds, "I must forget him because he doesn't know I'm alive."

You sometimes get the distinct feeling that more went on *between* issues of *The Jaguar* than in them. A lot has changed. Cat Girl is now part of the jet set and, while Ralph doesn't exactly approve, they start dating. Sort of.

Events ultimately lead them to a thrill-seeking African safari and the usual wild adventures for the Jaguar. But the real story is what develops between Ralph and Lydia. She's fallen in love with him, she admits, having completely forgotten she ever knew he was the Jaguar (blame the Strontium 90).

"Then one day I saw you on TV and something strange hit me...a sixth sense," she explains. "I decided to try to win the love of a *normal* human being...an attractive man like you!" The sick cat was a ruse to arrange a meeting.

Surprisingly, Ralph reciprocates.

"You're the lovelist woman I've ever met," he tells her. "Caring for you won't be difficult...just inevitable."

"Oh, Ralph! You darling!" Lydia swoons.

"I'm not lying," Ralph thinks to himself. "She's changed ..and all those years of devotion to *the Jaguar* are touching! I can love her as Ralph Hardy and she'll never be the wiser."

You have to wonder in what direction they were trying to take the Jaguar. By this time, they had completely put behind the robots and dinosaurs and aliens adventure formula on which the Jaguar and the Fly were constructed in favor of a distinctly sophisticated, more realistic treatment. In many ways, the Jaguar strip was moving in the direction of being a romance book with an incidental superhero!

The letter's column hints that a Superman-style imaginary story in which the Jaguar walks down the aisle with one of his paramours is in the offing.

Instead, the series abruptly ends with Issue #15, with no sign of Cat Girl, or should I say, Lydia Fellin?

Jill Ross briefly resurfaces as Hardy's student nurse assistant, but since she's suffering from selective amnesia too, and no longer knows the Jaguar's secret identity, there's no detectable romantic tension.

On that off note, the Jaguar ends. The series lasted only two years.

A stray inventory story popped up in *Pep* #168 (Jan 1964). A revisitation of the scene of the Jaguar's origin, "The Secret of the White Jaguar" marked a fitting conclusion to the series. It was promised for a future issue back in *Jaguar* #12's letter column. (Another promised story, "The Jaguar's Mask" never materialized—not even in *Pep* or *Laugh*, which ran intermittent Jaguar shorts.)

I can't imagine what happened after that. Maybe Cat Girl won him over. Maybe they did finally mate—I mean, wed. While the Jaguar has popped up over the years (mostly recently in *Sabrina* #30!), he was never the same. Frankly, neither was Cat Girl after being tamed. I lost interest in her after she became mere Lydia Fellin.

Still, I like to think that the Jaguar and Cat Girl together found feline happiness somewhere between issues—where all the action apparently took place back then. It would be nice to think all her scheming and lusting came to something. After all, what are sex goddesses about if not achieving their ardent desires?

As for me, I'd like the pick of any litter of little Cat Girls that came out of that mating. They must have grown up by now....

* NOTE: A rough sketch of the ponytail Cat Girl survives in the late John Rosenberger's files, which suggests that this design was originally conceived as an unrealized, unnamed Jaguar sidekick similar to Fly-Girl.

From Disney to Dragon Ball Z, First Las Vegas Comic-Con Has It All

(LAS VEGAS, NV)—**The First Annual Las Vegas Comic-Con (**www.LasVegasComicCon.com), a multimedia entertainment event open to the public, will be held **in the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Friday – Sunday, October 31 – November 2, 2003.**

"This will be the largest event of its kind in Las Vegas; a colorful gathering of artists, writers, creators, publishers, dealers, collectors and the general public," said Robert Brueggeman, Event Director.

"The three day show will have a wide variety of activities for adults and children interested in comics, anime, film, video games and role-playing games. There will be celebrity autograph guests, interactive gaming contests, more than 400 exhibitors buying and selling comics, toys, art and movie memorabilia, and a prize-filled Halloween party," Brueggeman explained.

"Virtually all areas of comic art and entertainment will be covered for children and adults, from science fiction to fantasy, from the superheroes of the 1930's Golden Age of comics to the most recent anime and action adventure card games, such as the popular Dragon Ball Z™."

The show is co-sponsored by eBay and Comics Guaranty Corporation, and in association with Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, Diamond Comic Distributors and the Alliance Game Distributors 2003 Las Vegas Retailer Summit (November 3 –4).

Publishers scheduled to attend include representatives of Cross Gen, DC, and Wizard.

Among the many scheduled activities:

Question and Answer sessions with Brian Azzarello, *100 bullets* and *Hellblazer* (Vertigo); Brian Michael Bendis, writer of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Daredevil* and *Alias* (Marvel); Dan Brereton, *Nocturnals*, various artwork for White Wolf Gaming books (White Wolf); Jim Cheung, *Scion* (Crossgen); Roman Dirge, creator of *Lenore*; Butch Guice, *Ruse* (Crossgen), Sean McKeever, *Sentinel* and *Waiting Place* (Marvel and Slave Labor Graphics); Steven Niles, *30 Days of Night* (Idea Design Works); Brian Pulido, *Lady Death* (Crossgen/Code 6); Chris Reilly, *Punch and Judy* (Slave Labor Graphics); Darick Robertson, *Transmetropolitan*, *The New Warriors*, *Born* and *Wolverine* (Vertigo and Marvel); Jill Thompson, *Death at Death's Door*/*Scary Godmother* (Vertigo); Bill Willingham of Vertigo's *Fables*; and Judd Winick, *Exiles*, Barry Ween, *The Outsiders*, *Green Lantern*, *Green Arrow* (DC/Marvel)

Exhibits of anime panels and screenings by ADV Films, Animego, AnimeNetwork, Bandai Entertainment, Central Park Media, Dark Horse, FUNimation, Manga Entertainment, Synch-Point, TOKYOPOP, and Urban Vision.

Free demonstrations of the new Sony Playstation 2 Eyetoy interactive game camera, and the VGO Network and Penny Arcade will host an XBOX Soul Calibur II tournament.

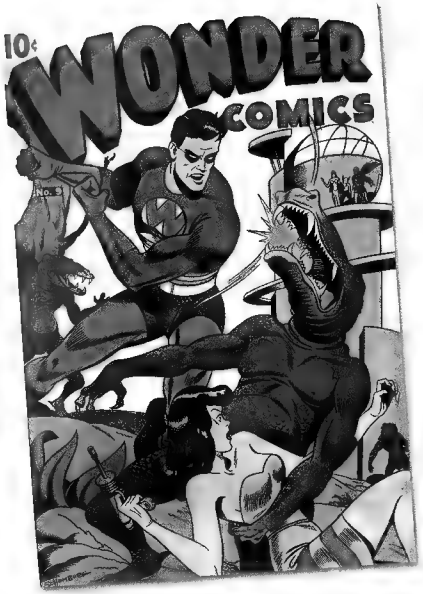
Christopher P. Reilly, creator of "The Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy," will launch the publication of the sequel at the show, "Punch and Judy. A Grand Guignol."

Admission to the show is $45 for a three-day pass (purchased by October 15), or $20 for a one-day pass; children, age ten and under, are admitted free.

Discount room rates are available at Mandalay Bay and the adjacent Luxor and Excalibur hotels. (Ask for the group code, XCOMIC, when making room reservations.)

More than $40,000 in cash and prizes will be awarded during the adults-only (21 and older) Halloween Masquerade Party, 7.30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., Friday, October 31. Admission to the costume party is $20 per person; $18 with a Las Vegas Comic-Con pass. Cocktails and food will be available for purchase.

For additional information about Las Vegas Comic-Con, October 31 – November 2 in the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, call (866) 36-COMIC, or go to www.LasVegasComicCon.com.



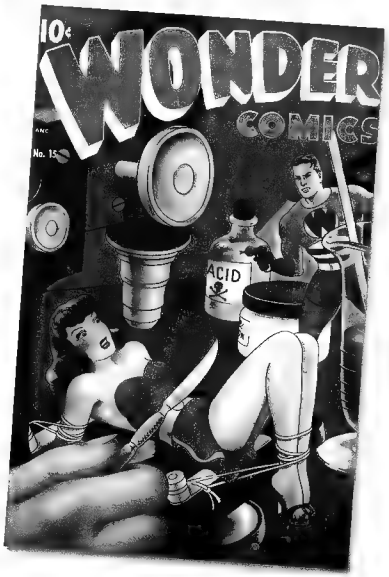
Good Girl Art
continued from page 47

out in *Pep Comics*. The strip was drawn, with relish, by Harry Lucey. He went on to draw several episodes of *Pep's* violent vigilante, the Hangman. Madam S. was replaced by Archie, who slipped into the magazine in #22 (Dec 1941). The *Archie* of the early years of WWII was not quite the bland, clean-scrubbed feature it became a few years later. Its co-creator, Bob Montana, drew Archie's girlfriends, both Betty and Veronica, in the accepted Good Girl manner and there were frequent swimsuit, tight sweater and low-cut prom gown shots. Harry Sahle, who inherited *Archie* when Montana went into the service, carried on in that tradition Sahle later drew several features about sexy teenage girls, notably *Candy* for the Quality line.

Up until early 1944 the MLJ titles continued to run several features that emphasized bosoms, bondage and bloodshed. But in 1944 they cancelled *Zip*—having already shut down *Blue Ribbon* back in 1942—and gradually converted *Pep* and *Top-Notch* into all humor titles. The Good Girl Movement, however, went on to flourish in other venues.

Especially at Fox, the company founded by former DC accountant Victor Fox. His line of comic books got rolling in the spring of 1939 with the issuance of its initial title *Wonder Comics* (later *Wonderworld Comics*). This was followed by *Mystery Men*, *Fantastic Comics*, *Science Comics* and *Weird Comics*. Emulating the more flamboyant of the pulp magazines and the Fiction House comics, the Fox titles featured partially dressed young women on the majority of its covers. Most of the distressed damsels wore what appeared to be slips of assorted hues and a goodly number of them were also tied, chained or otherwise bound. Since the Eisner-Iger shop provided art for both Fox and Fiction House, that accounts for the similarity in packaging. Cover artists included Eisner, Joe Simon, Lou Fine, the Cazeneuve Brothers (Arturo and Louis, often working with penciler Pierce Rice) and a formidable lady named Ramona Patenaude. Initially, though, all the activity was on the covers and there wasn't much in the way of Good Girl Art to be found inside the magazines themselves.

By late 1941, though, the interior art had undergone several changes. The Eisner-Iger material had gone, followed by the output of other shops and an in-house art staff that consisted chiefly of Pierce Rice and the Cazeneuve boys On their final days the contents of many of the magazines, particularly *Wonderworld*, bore considerable resemblance to the MLJ titles. This was due to Sundell's having moved over to Fox and to his hiring of such artists as Montana, Warren King, Ramona Patenaude and Harry Lucey. All of whom had contributed to the characteristic MLJ



look. In addition, Fox introduced a couple of Shield surrogates in the persons of U.S. Jones and V-Man.

The Flame, venerable Fox superhero, took on a sidekick in the person of Flame Girl and there were now also ladies aboard who proved strong competition for Madam Satan. The aptly named Queen of Evil surfaced in the final issue of *Fantastic* (Nov 1941) and then appeared in both issues of the short-lived *V...Comics*. Also known as Nagana and "the cursed of Isis," she was "risen from three thousand years of living death." Her costume suggested both an ancient Egyptian and a burlesque stripper. The Sorceress of Zoom had been in *Weird Comics* from its first issue (Apr 1940), but toward the end of her career she took a turn for the worse and began behaving extremely badly. In #18, for example, she broke into a cemetery, raised a corpse, disguised herself as a society girl, drugged and attempted to seduce an aging financier, attempted to steal a golden chalice and caused not one but two train wrecks. All of this, she accomplished, before getting her comeuppance, in just seven pages. The artist of her latter day adventures was Harry Lucey, who seemed to thrive on this sort of thing. In the 1950s, he reformed and became an artist on the now sedate *Archie*.

During the Second World War period Good Girl Art continued to spread. Although such major outfits as DC and Fawcett remained conservative in their depiction of women—with the exception of the bondage/domination stuff that found its way into *Wonder Woman*—several lesser companies yielded to temptation. One such was Hillman, who'd ventured somewhat cautiously into the funny book field back in 1940 with two short-lived titles—*Miracle Comics* and *Rocket Comics* Their third try, *Victory Comics* in 1941, did no better and expired after four issues. Next came *Air Fighters* and it, too, flopped—or so it seemed initially The first issue had a cover date of November 1941 and the contents were provided by the Funnies, Inc. shop, who'd also supplied the material for the unvictorious *Victory*. A full year later a second issue of *Air Fighters* hit the stands. There was a completely new lineup of features, masterminded by Charles Biro. Working anonymously, the flamboyant Biro turned out a cover that had all the color and appeal of a circus poster and invented Air Boy and his superplaner, to be the star in the revised book.

Eventually the magazine, a success this time, changed its name to *Air Boy*. By then the blond young flying hero was having adventures that any pubescent boy would envy. Especially stimulating were his encounters with a lady known as Valkyrie, an ambiguous girl pilot who matched the femme fatales of the movies when it came to being enigmatic. She also wore a very low-cut blouse. The artist on most of the stories was the able Fred Kida.

Air Fighters introduced several other unconventional aviators in its pages. For Good Girl aficionados the most appealing feature was *The Black Angel*. Here was a lady who had absolutely no fear of flying. And her courage was all the more impressive when you consider that she had to contend not only with the usual hazards of air travel but with the extra dangers that faced a freelance WWII combat pilot. On top of that, lovely raven-haired Sylvia Manners had to cope with such out of the ordinary aerial problems as giant vampire bats, witches and werewolves. Bringing new meaning to the expression "flying by the seat of your pants," the Black Angel's costume was beyond doubt one of the tightest fitting outfits to be seen in 1940s comic books. In her first outing she went up against an impressive female flyer known as Baroness Blood, "the Nazi cobra of the skies." In a mere eight pages the Black Angel managed to save a British aircraft factory from a German air raid, escape from the nasty blonde baroness' torture chamber and then defeat her in an aerial dogfight. Readers also got to see Sylvia in her underwear and, albeit from the back, topless. In subsequent episodes the Black Angel flew to Nazi-held Greece to overcome a witch known as the Hag from Hades and her pet Wolfman and later saved her native England from Nazis disguised as giant bats. The first artist to draw the Black Angel was John Cassone. He worked for the Jerry Iger shop. Cassone was of the school of illustrative artists that included Lou Fine and Reed Crandall, but he put even more emphasis on the female figure than they did. He was especially fascinated with buttocks. He also drew for Hillman's *Clue Comics*. His character there was a Marine who doubled as a crime fighter He was called Twilight and wore a shaggy costume that appeared to include a built-in ponytail in the cowl. Cassone launched this feature, managing to include plentiful samples of his personal approach to Good Girl Art.

In the middle and late 1940s, Good Girl Art blossomed even more, everywhere from the multiplying true crime comics to the new Fox titles. There were jungle girls and phantom ladies and gun molls everywhere. But that is a subject for a separate study.

Panels from August 22, 1948 **Tarzan** Sunday page, penciled by Celardo and inked by Burne Hogarth. © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc./United Features Syndicate.

Splash panel detail, possibly drawn by Celardo in collaboration with Mike Roy from **Intimate Love** #27 (Apr 1954). © Standard Publications.

John Celardo
A COMIC-BOOK CHECKLIST

by Alberto Becattini and Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.
(with special thanks to Jerry Bails, Riccardo Morrocchi and the Grand Comics Database)

Credits include pencils and inks unless otherwise noted

A) ORIGINAL EDITIONS

Adventures Into Darkness (Standard, 1952 53) #5, 11, 12, 14
Adventures Into the Unknown (ACG, 1949-50) #5, 6, 9, 10 [inks over Bob Lubbers?], 12
Aquaman (DC, 1978) #60 [inks over Don Newton]
Army at War (DC, 1978) #1 [inks]
Authentic Police Cases (St. John, 1950) #9
Batman (DC, 1981) Robin and Catwoman #333 [inks over Irv Novick]
Batman Family (DC, 1978) Batgirl and Robin #16 [inks over Don Heck]; Robin and Batgirl #20 [inks over Don Heck]
Battlefront (Standard, 1952) #5
Best Romance (Standard 1952-53) #5, 6
Beware the Creeper (DC/National, 1969) #5 [inks over Steve Ditko, with Mike Peppe?], 6 [inks over Ditko and Jack Sparling]
Billy West (Standard, 1949-51) Billy West/Buck Ranger #1-7, 9, 10; Uncle Dan #4; Covers #1-6
Bill Stern's Sports Book (Ziff-Davis-1951) #10
Blazing West (ACG, 1949) Injun Jones #5 [inks over Lubbers?], 10 [inks over Lubbers?]; Hooded Horseman #14
Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery (Gold Key/Western, 1967-80) #19, 25-32, 34, 36, 38-40, 42, 44-51, 54, 55, 58-63, 65, 72
Challengers of the Unknown (DC, 1977 78) #83 87 [inks over Keith Giffen]
Claw the Unconquered (DC, 1978) #10 11 [inks over Keith Giffen]
Crime Files (Standard, 1952) Cover #5
Date with Danger (Standard 1953) Cover [?] #6
Dead-Eye Western Comics (Hillman, 1950) #9
Detective Comics (DC, 1978-79) Batgirl #479 [inks], 485 [inks over Don Heck]
Exciting War (Standard, 1952-53) #5-7, 9 [inks: Mike Peppe]; Covers #5-8 Fantastic Worlds (Standard, 1952) #5 [with Art Saaf], 6 [with ?], 7, Covers #5, 7
Feature Comics (Quality, 1940-41) Samar #33-36 [as "John Charles"]; Doll-Man #38-43
Fight Comics (Fiction House, 1940 41) Rip Regan Power Man #3-5, 7, 8 [?], 9 [inks: Herman Bolstein], 10, 11, 13, 14 [?]; Covers #9 [with Nick Cardy?], 13
Ghosts! (DC, 1980/81) #94 [inks], 107 [inks over Rodin Rodriguez], 108 [inks over Mark Texeira]
G.I. Joe (Ziff-Davis, 1951-52) #11 [#2], 8
Girls' Love Stories (DC/National, 1961) Green Lantern (DC, 1978/79) #107 [inks over Alex Saviuk], 120 [inks over Don Heck]
Grimm's Ghost Stories (Gold Key/Western, 1972-82) #1, 3, 4, 10, 16 19, 26, 28, 30, 31, 36, 42, 43, 45, 57; Cover #57 [part, with Jack Sparling, from interior panels]
Hawk and Dove (DC/National, 1969) #6 [inks over Gil Kane]
Heart Throbs (DC/National, 1969) [inks]
Hell-Rider (Skywald, 1971) The Butterfly #1 [inks: Mike Esposito]
Hit Comics (Quality, 1940-41) Old Witch #4-7, Hercules #8-10
House of Mystery (DC/National, 1970/79 83) #187 [inks over Win Mortimer], 264 [inks over George Ruppert], 282 [inks over Mike Sekowsky], 283 [inks over Romeo Tanghal], 284 [inks over Keith Giffen], 289 [inks over Howard Bender]; 291 [inks over Dick Ayers]; 293 [inks over George Tuska], 296 [inks over Carmine Infantino], 301 [inks over Trevor Von Eeden], 308 [inks over Mark Texeira], 316 [inks over George Tuska]
Intimate Love (Standard, 1950-54) #5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15-21, 23, 24, 26, 27
Jet Fighters (Standard, 1952-53) #5, 6 [inks over Leo Morey]. 7; Cover #7
Joe Yank (Standard, 1952-54) #5, 6 [with Art Saaf?], 7, 9, 12-15
Judge Colt (Gold Key/Western, 1969) – #1 [Celardo?]
Jumbo Comics (Fiction House, 1940-41) The Hawk #20 [?], 25; Covers #19 [?], 20, 24, 27
Jungle Comics (Fiction House, 1940-41/46-49) Kaänga #16, 17, 80-111; Captain Terry Thunder #78, 79, Covers #17 [?], 98 113
Kaänga (Fiction House, 1949-53) Kaänga #1, 10, 14, 18 [part reprints?]; Cover #1
Kid Cowboy (Ziff-Davis, 1950) #2-4
Lars of Mars (Ziff-Davis, 1951) #10
Little Al of the FBI (Ziff Davis, 1951) #11
Lost Worlds (Standard, 1952) #5 [inks over Alex Toth], 6 [with?]; Cover #5
Movie Comics (Fiction House, 1946) Johnny Danger #1
My Real Love (Standard, 1952) #5 [inks over Alex Toth?]
Mystery in Space (DC, 1980-81) #111 [inks over John Calnan], 113 [inks over Trevor Von Eeden], 114 [inks over Trevor Von Eeden], 115 [inks over Greg La Rocque/Denys Cowan], 116 [inks over Trevor Von Eeden]
My True Love (Standard, 1952) [inks]

National Comics (Quality, 1940-41) Wonder Boy #1-5; Paul Bunyan #1-9
New Romances (Standard, 1951-54) #5, 7, 9-12, 15 [inks over Sid Greene], 17-19, 21
Operation: Peril (ACG, 1952) #13 [inks over Al Cammarata]
Out of the Shadows (Standard, 1952) #7, 9 [inks over Reed Crandall], 10
Ozark Ike (Standard, 1952) Covers and introductory panels #24, 25
Planet Comics (Fiction House, 1940/41)
Don Granval #8 [with Nick Cardy?]; The Red Comet #12: Cover #12
Popular Romance (Standard, 1949-54) – #5, 8, 11, 13 [with Mike Peppe?], 16, 17, 18, 20, 24 25, 27, 28
Rangers Comics (Fiction House, 1946-48)
Tiger Man #30-33, 35-39
Real Life (Standard, 1948/50-52) #44, 53, 56 [with?], 57-59
Ripley's Believe It or Not – True Ghost Stories (Gold Key/Western, 1969-80) #15, 16, 19, 20, 22-30, 37, 46, 49, 55 [inks: Wanda Ippolito], 59 [inks. Wanda Ippolito], 60, 63, 64, 71, 85
Romantic Adventures (ACG, 1950-51) #6, 7, 12
Secret Hearts (DC/National, 1969-71) [inks]
Secrets of Haunted House (DC, 1981) #33 [inks over Jerry Bingham], 41 [inks over Charles Nicholas]
Shadow Play (Whitman/Western, 1982) #1
Shroud of Mystery (Whitman/Western, 1982) #1
Smash Comics (Quality, 1941) Espionage #19 21
Spy-Hunters (ACG, 1950)
Super Adventure Album (K.G. Murray, c.1978) nn [inks over Rich Buckler]
The Superman Family (DC, 1978) Lois Lane #191-192 [inks over Win Mortimer]
Swamp Thing (DC, 1977-78) [inks]
This Is War (Standard, 1952-53) #5-8, 9 [inks over Alex Toth/Rocco Mastroserio?]; Covers #5, 6
Thrilling (Standard, 1950-51) Buck Ranger #11 [inks: Art Saaf?], 78; Billy West #77, 80
Thrilling Romances (Standard, 1950-54) #6 [inks], 7 [inks over Lubbers?], 9, 12, 14-16, 17 [inks], 18, 20, 22, 25
Time Warp (DC, 1980) #2 [inks over Romeo Tanghal], 5 [inks over Jerry Bingham]
Today's Romance (Standard, 1952) #5-8
Turok, Son of Stone (Dell/Western, 1956) #5 [inks over Bob Correa?]
The Twilight Zone (Gold Key/Western, 1970-78) #34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43-45, 47, 52, 54-56, 83 [reprint?]
The Unexpected (DC, 1982) #222 [inks over John Clark/Mark Silvestri]
Unknown Soldier (DC, 1980-81) #238, 247, 249 [all inks over Dick Ayers]
The Unseen (Standard, 1952-54) #7, 8 [inks over Mike Sekowsky], 11, 12, 13 [inks over Nick Cardy?], 14
Weird Adventures (Ziff-Davis, 1951) #10
Weird War Tales (DC, 1979-82) #75 [inks over Don Heck], 78 [inks over Dick Ayers], 84 [inks over Charles Nicholas], 91 [inks over Dick Ayers], 93 [inks over Denys Cowan], 107 [inks over Pat Broderick], 109 [inks over Bob Hall]; Creature Commandos #93 [inks over Pat Broderick], 102 [inks?], 108 [inks over Bob Hall]
Western Hearts (Standard, 1949-1952) #1, 2, 4, 7-10
Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe (DC, 1985) Challengers Mountain #4 [inks over Keith Giffen]
Wings Comics (Fiction House, 1941/1946-49) Clipper Kirk/Derek West #9; Suicide Smith #71, 72, 74, 76, 80-104
The Witching Hour (DC/National, 1969) #5 [inks over George Roussos?]
Young Love (DC/National, 1970) [pencils]
Young Romance (DC/National, 1971) #170 [pencils], 171 [pencils]

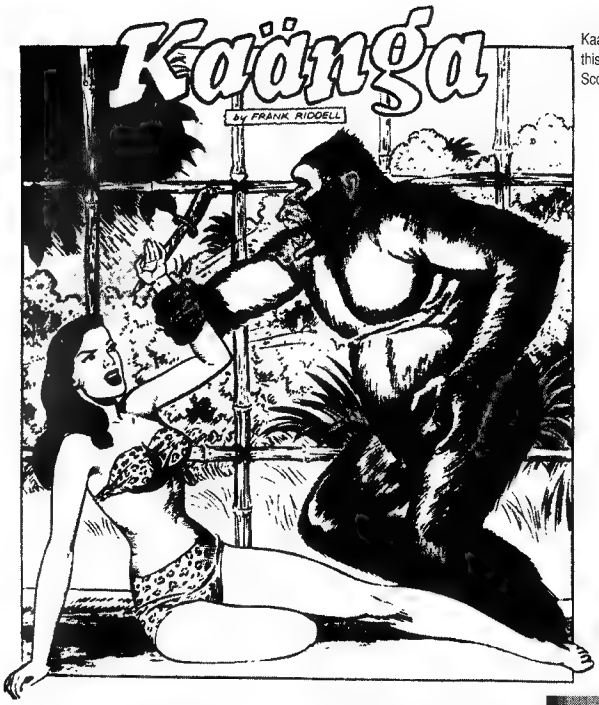
B) REPRINTS

Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery (Western/Gold Key/Whitman, 1980-82) #77, 78, 81, 85, 89, 92, 96, 97
Buried Treasure (Pure Imagination, 1988) #3 [inks over Toth from This is War #9]
Grimm's Ghost Stories (Western/Gold Key/Whitman, 1982) #57, 60
Flaming Carrot Comics (Renegade Press, 1987) #16 [Power Man from Fight Comics #7]
I Love You Special (ACG, 2002) #1
Kaanga (IW, 1958) #1 [from Fiction House Kaänga #18]
Kid Cowboy (St. John, 1954) – Kid Cowboy #4 [from Ziff-Davis Kid Cowboy #2]
Ki-Gorr the Killer (AC Comics, 1995) #1 [covers to Jungle Comics #98, 112]
Mystery Comics Digest (Western/Gold Key, 1972-75) #10, 13, 16-19, 21-23, 25, 26
Ripley's Believe It or Not (Western/Gold Key/Whitman, 1979-80) #78, 85, 93
Ripley's Believe It or Not (Golden Press, 1979) #11401
Seduction of the Innocent (Eclipse, 1985) #1 [inks over Crandall, from Out of the Shadows #7]
Standard Comics (Pure Imagination, undated) #1 [inks over Toth]
The Twilight Zone (Western/Gold Key/Whitman, 1976-78) #71, 79, 84
Wings Comics (Fiction House, 1950) Suicide Smith #114, 115

Panel detail from **Ripley's Believe It or Not** #16 (Oct 1969), penciled and inked by Celardo. © Ripley's Enterprises

Pane from February 19, 1967 **Tarzan** Sunday page. Written, drawn and lettered by John Celardo. © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc./United Features Syndicate.

Central panel of a beautiful page from **House of Mystery** #283 (Aug 1980). Penciled by Romeo Tanghal, inked by Celardo. © DC Comics



Kaanga's mate, Ann, is threatened by a gorilla in this splash page from **Jungle Comics**, 1948. © T. T. Scott/Fiction House

Celardo—Unsung Hero-Maker

[continued from page 31]

in such super-hero titles as *Challengers of the Unknown* or *Green Lantern*, as well as in such mystery titles as *House of Mystery*, *Ghosts* and *The Unexpected*. Celardo did his last comic book work in late 1984 or early 1985, inking Keith Giffen's pencils on a one pager in the fourth issue of *Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe*, which was published with a June 1985 cover date.

In 1982 Hank Schlensker—who had assisted Roy Crane for 30 years on *Buz Sawyer*, taking over after Crane's death in 1977—decided to retire, and so did writer Ed Granberry. King Features asked Celardo to take over the drawing on the *Buz Sawyer* daily strip (the Sunday page had been discontinued in 1974). Celardo did his best, and managed to imitate Roy Crane's graphic approach on the strip, drawing it (as Crane and Schlensker had done before him) on Doubletone Craftint paper to create shading effects. Until 1987, the scripts on *Buz Sawyer* were provided by veteran comic writer Elliot Caplin, but as the number of papers carrying the strip kept falling, Caplin refused to continue writing it on account of the low percentages he was getting on it. King Features then asked Celardo to take over the scripts as well, and Celardo accepted, on condition that they would find a replacement that is, he would write it until its imminent cancellation, which took place on October 7, 1989, when the once-popular *Buz Sawyer* finally gave up the ghost.

Conclusion

Free from the daily chores of writing and drawing a comic strip, Celardo was now able to devote himself completely to his editing job. At 71, he was understandably tired of toiling at the drawing board, and was willing to spend his remaining working days as quietly as possible before retiring to golf courses and bowling alleys. Unfortunately, that was not to be, as a stroke left him partially incapacitated. His mind, though, is as lucid as ever, and when he and his pal Bob Lubbers reminisce about the good old days, Celardo's memories are strikingly vivid and precise. As Lubbers says, "John is a tough guy." He may have been wounded but he won't be beat.

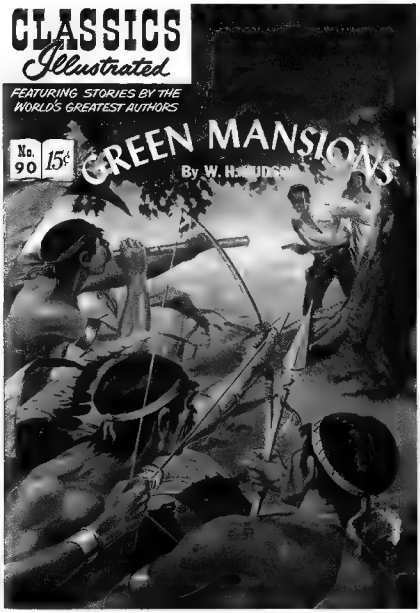
John Celardo (right) with Dik Browne at the 1983 *Hagar* 10th Anniversary Party. Browne's caricature was drawn by Celardo.

RIMA THE JUNGLE GIRL

BY STEVEN FEARS

The earliest known portrait of W. H. Hudson, discovered in 1946 at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. It was taken in Buenos Aires about 1868, when Hudson was twenty-seven, six years before he sailed for England. At the time he was collecting birds of the pampas for the Smithsonian.

Image of William Henry Hudson from the Smithsonian Institution



© GILBERTON

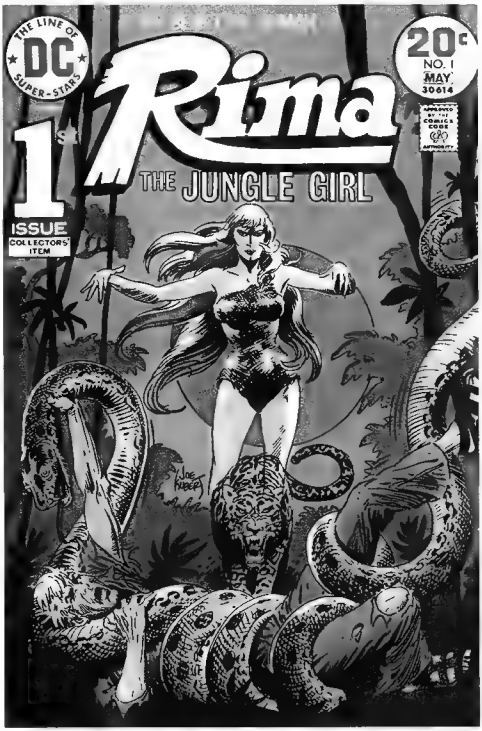
Near the end of the Silver Age, right on the edge of the Modern Age (or Bronze Age, as some call it) of comics, was a short lived but wonderful gem of a book titled, *Rima, The Jungle Girl*. The first issue was cover dated April-May 1974 (hard to believe that was almost 30 years ago!). Some books from this time period are getting harder to find even though the prices are relatively affordable. I'd still call this a Silver Age book because the direct market really hadn't taken comics into the present day distribution, and it could be found along with other comics still being sold in grocery stores and convenience shops and newsstands.

For those of you who haven't discovered this book, you are missing out on a wonderful adventure story and beautiful art. There were only seven issues published and it lasted a little over a year. The last cover date was April-May 1975. The price had just been increased to 25 cents with the sixth issue.

DC was really on a publishing roll at this time. Some of the books being published at this time, besides the established titles such as *Superman*, *Action*, *Batman*, *Detective*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Flash*, *The Brave and the Bold*, *Our Army At War* and *The Justice League of America*, were the newer titles such as *Shazam!*, *Ghosts*, *Plop!*, *Weird Western Tales*, *Kamandi*, *OMAC*, *The Witching Hour* and *Rima, The Jungle Girl*. During that time period in the 1970s, DC was publishing a lot of good books. Hopefully, many of you are discovering how good these books were, and *Rima* is one of the good ones to try and collect.

First of all, Joe Kubert was the editor and adaptor/writer, and he did the art on all of the seven covers (absolute beauties). The interior art was by Nestor Redondo and his group, a really great choice. There were some neat little back-up features, too. I mean, you couldn't go wrong with this book.

Rima was based on the classic book, *Green Mansions*, written by William Henry Hudson and published in 1904. Although his parents were Americans who immigrated to Argentina in the early 1830s, he never saw the United States. He was born at the Estancia of the Twenty Five Ombu Trees, near Buenos Aires, on August 4, 1841. He grew up riding over the pampas and learning to love nature. However, in 1874, he sailed for England, never to return, but he had his memories and observations. His books finally started to sell. *Green Mansions* appeared and is generally considered to be his masterpiece. Of his twenty-four books, it is the most widely known and read. It is both a romance and an allegory. The jungle world of Rima is more than a jungle. Rima is the personification of an ideal; she is a child of the forest and possesses unearthly beauty and an aura of other-worldness. Rima is a mystical and magical person. A bird-goddess. Unfortunately, in the classic book, Rima does not survive. However, in the comics, she lives.

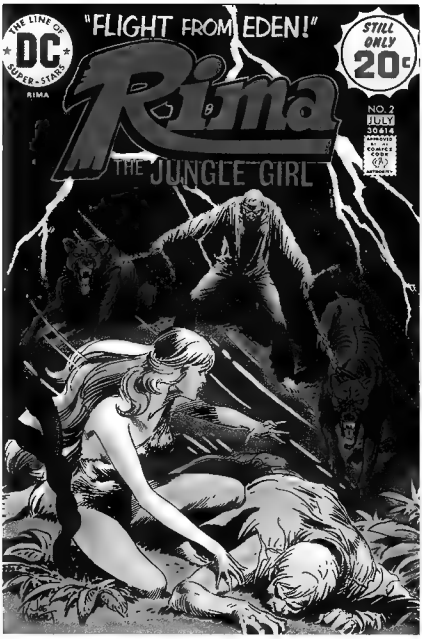


Classics Illustrated published a very good adaptation of Hudson's book as one of their many wonderful titles. The art is by Alex A. Blum, and I think his art is very good and fits the story quite well. In fact, I recommend finding this particular book and placing it alongside the DC *Rima* comics. There was also a movie titled *Green Mansions* released in 1959. I've seen this one (on Turner Classic Movies), and it's a very nice adaptation. It stars Audrey Hepburn as Rima and Anthony Perkins as Abel. It was directed by Mel Ferrer. Catch it if you can.

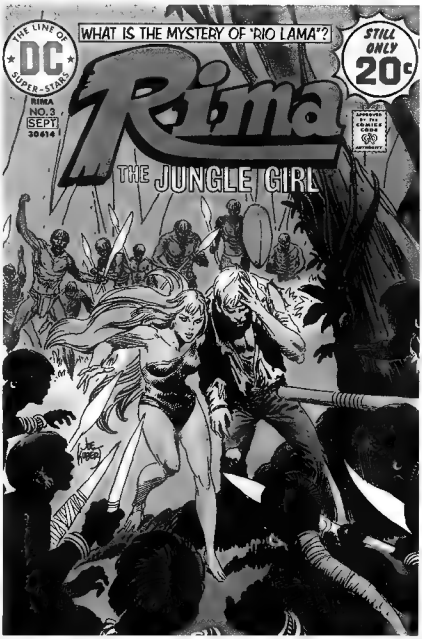
Back during the 1970s, Carmine Infantino, then Publisher/President of DC Comics, asked Joe Kubert to adapt the book to comics. Joe Kubert wrote and transposed the book into the series featuring Rima. Kubert did the adaptations of Rima in terms of editing and layouts. Nestor Redondo and his group did the finishes.

The origin of Rima took the first four issues. We're introduced to a man, Abel, in the first issue. He is stumbling through the Venezuelan jungle in South America. He falls, and sees a beautiful girl before he passes out. He wakes up in a hut, with an old man sitting near him. Upon waking up, he begins to ask many questions and then tells the old man how he got there. His tale begins with him running from a Venezuelan Revolution. He was on the side of the rebels but had to run to avoid

© DC COMICS



I HAVE BEEN AL... MY IMAGINATION! THE GIRL... THE OLD TREE... EVERYTHING!
OLD MAN... FOR SAVING MY LIFE! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU--
OH, NO, SEÑOR... IT IS NOT I YOU SHOULD THANK..
IT WAS MY GRANDDAUGHTER, RIMA, WHO DREW THE POISON FROM YOU!
NEXT ISSUE
PART 2 OF THE ORIGIN OF
RIMA
THE JUNGLE GIRL

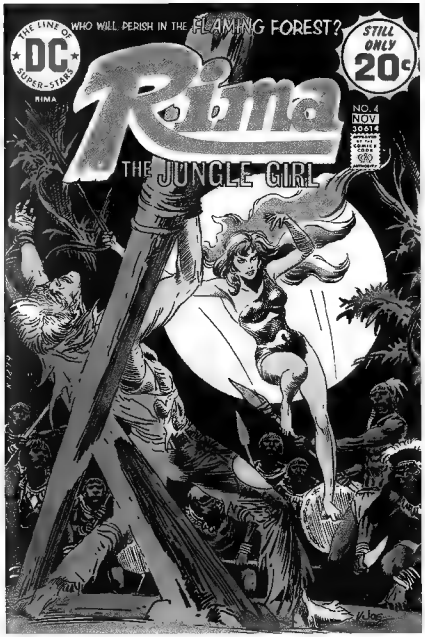


capture. He follows the Orinoco far upstream until he finds a village of native Indians. They tell him of a strange witch girl deep in the jungle. He goes in spite of the warnings and meets up with Rima.

The back-up feature is "Space Voyagers," by Jack Oleck and art by Alex Nino. It's just five pages about a small group of explorers in a roving spaceship. And in the second issue, Abel discovers more about Rima and how she came to be. When her mother died, her grandfather, Nuflo, brought her into the forest to live. The jungle became her whole world. She became friends to all of the creatures of the forest. Her jungle is like the Garden of Eden; it is ideal. Abel falls in love with her. At the end of the second chapter, however, she decides she wants to see the world beyond the jungle; the world of her mother.

The second chapter of the Space Voyagers is, this time, written by Robert Kanigher and still has the art by Alex Nino. This feature, by Kanigher and Nino, would appear through issue five. In issue six, Kanigher pairs with Ric Estrada for the back-up story. And issue seven joins Kanigher with Noly Zamora doing the art.

There is more beautiful Redondo and group art in the third



NO ONE WILL TURN ME FROM MY PATH... NO ONE!
I WILL FIND THE LAND... BEYOND THE GREAT MOUNTAINS... WHERE MY MOTHER'S PEOPLE LIVE.
WE MUST FOLLOW HER, OLD NUFLO.
YES, ABEL...

issue as Rima continues on her quest to discover the secrets of her past. The grandfather tells Abel more about Rima's mother and how Rima was born in the mountains of Rio Lama.

In issue number four, while Rima has left to discover her origins, Abel is captured by the Malagar Headhunters. He escapes being sacrificed to a giant crocodile and runs through the jungle, finding the grandfather's cabin and the grandfather dead. He then goes to Rima's giant tree, only to find it charred, and he believes Rima to be dead. Aided by the friendly Indians who first helped when he escaped the Revolution, he leads an attack on the Malagar Headhunters, whom he believes to have destroyed Rima. After defeating the headhunters, he returns to bury Nuflo, Rima's grandfather. While wishing for Rima to still be there, in one of the most beautiful panels to appear in any comic (page 14, panel one), Rima appears and is reunited with Abel. They enter the jungle, hand in hand. This concludes the four-part origin.

With the fifth issue, a new story is told. An evil scientist is experimenting with the jungle Indians, torturing those who do not do his bidding. He kills some by freezing them, and others by steam. Abel is captured but Rima comes to his rescue. She summons the jungle creatures to help defeat the evil man. The theme of this story is that "evil begets evil...violence summons forth violence...which destroys its originator." A good moral.

Nestor Redondo and group's art just kept getting better and better with each issue, and the sixth issue was no exception. The story is about an evil hunter looking for a legendary white jaguar. Abel is hired as a guide to take this hunter, Trask, to Mt. Ytaioa, but Trask has other ideas. Abel is in danger and Rima, again, comes to the rescue. However, Rima and Abel become trapped and the white jaguar comes to the rescue only to be shot

© DC COMICS

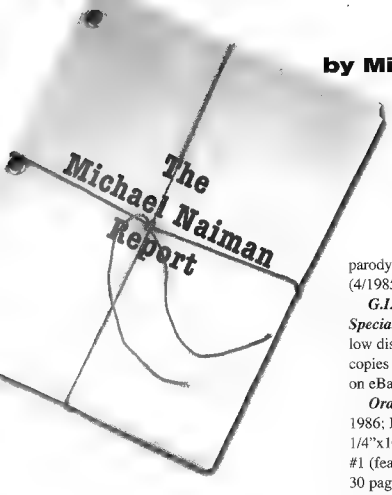
IN THE ARCTURIANS WANT TO THANK US FOR SAVING OUR HUSBANDS
IF WE DON'T AWAKE OURSELVES SOON WE'LL BE FROZEN STIFF!
IN THE ARCTURIANS DON'T REALIZE THEIR TOUCH WILL FREEZE US TO D-DEATH!
P-PREPARE TO BLAST OFF IMMEDIATELY!
I H-HOPE THE ARCTURIANS KNOW WHY WE'RE NOT STAYING FOR DINNER!
STRANGE! IN SAVING ARCTURUS WE MADE IT SAFE FOR US TO EVEN TOUCH THE VERY PEOPLE WE AIDED! I WONDER WHAT SITUATION WE'LL BE FACING NEXT?
OUR JOURNEY IS JUST BEGINNING-- WE KNOW--BEST!
WHO CAN TELL WHAT STRANGE WORLD THE WANDERING SPACE HOMEBOUNDS WILL VISIT NEXT? BE SURE TO READ THEIR NEXT THRILLING ADVENTURE IN EVERY ISSUE OF RIMA THE JUNGLE GIRL!
THE END
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN JULY

while killing Trask. It is a story about sacrifice.

Sadly, issue number seven is the final published issue. Of course, we didn't know that at the time but eventually figured it out. In this story, people are deceived by the son of a beautiful woman who is camping in the jungle. The boy gets into trouble be teasing some of the animals, only he acts innocent. Abel and Rima have a slight falling out. In the end, however, the boy pays for his cruel ways by losing his life, and Rima and Abel reconcile.

It's a shame that this series only lasted seven issues. It's not often that a classic is adapted by a great such as Joe Kubert (of course, his *Tarzan* is still a milestone), but we're glad that he did. This short-lived series makes quite an impression.

Besides this series, go read the source, *Green Mansions*, and even seek out the Classics Illustrated version of the Hudson Book. And, just maybe, even try to find the movie Remember, this series is now over 25 years old and just waiting to be discovered. Don't pass this title by; you'll have some beautiful books to read.



by Michael Naiman

Potpourri, Another.

Here we go again! Another potpourri of comic stuff. No particular target this month. So those of you who feel persecuted by my inquiries can breathe easy for another month.

• • •

What's more frustrating for a collector than to run across an item that is not mentioned in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*? How can you figure out what it's worth? Who cares? Feel good that you've discovered a little gem!

Thanks to Doug Sulipa for unearthing these NITPG (pronounced Nit-Pig) "Not in *The Price Guide*" books.

***Blondie, Dagwood & Daisy* by CHIC YOUNG** [Harvey Pub; 1953; 100-page square bound Giant; USA], #1 (scarce; low distribution; cover states "ALL NEW Stories"; also contains: "Colonel & the Duchess" by Chic Young, "Flop Family" by Swan; 1 page of Popeye, includes Popeye spanking Olive Oyl panel; 1 page Felix the Cat; Dagwood & Herbert in *drag* panels). Doug sold a GD+ for US $75.

Mendy and the Golem Cover states "Adventures of..." 1981-4/1985; Mendy Enterprises Pub USA newsstand color comic; "World's only kosher comic book"; Jewish themes; Estrin-s & Sears-a #1 (1981), #2-9, #10 (Star Wars parody; May/1983), #11 (July/1983)-19 (4/1985).

G.I. Joe, A Real American Hero Special #1 (2/1995; Todd McFarlane art; low distribution; scarce) un-slabbed copies usually sell for $50-150 regularly on eBay!

Oracle Presents (Oracle Comics Pub; 1986; B&W comics magazine, 8-1/4"x10-3/4"; cover price $1, 36 pages); #1 (featuring Topaz-c/s; GGA painted-c; 30 pages of George Perez art; nudity panels).

Underdog (Harvey Pub; regular-size issues; 11/1993-7/1994) Vol. 2 #1 (11/93), 2, 3, 4, 5 (7/1994).

• • •

Spidey Musings: During the past few months, I've been looking at Spider Man sales from retailers, collectors and on-line auctions. I collected about 200 sales and here's what I discovered when I compared them to how the *Guide* valued the issues. All of the issues I looked at were unslabbed. What I found was: 1) NM issues sold for 90% of *Guide*, 2) VF/NM issues sold for 65% of *Guide*, 3) VF issues sold for 60% of *Guide*, and 4) FN issues sold for 51% of *Guide*. You make the call!

• • •

Motion Picture Funnies Weekly: First printed appearance of the Sub-Mariner (pre *Marvel Comics* #1), first comic book appearance of a Timely/Atlas/Marvel character (Ka-Zar was first in pulp format for three issues of his own title *Ka-Zar the Great*, published by Red Circle, Oct 1936, Jan 1937 and Jun 1937). One of the earliest super-hero promotional books (1939). According to the latest edition of the *Guide*, there are eight known copies (with a ninth suspected): one NM with white pages, the other seven having brown pages, and it has been reported by a well-known NY dealer that the other seven have some type of restoration.

But wait a minute—exactly how many copies are there of this book? And why does it keep changing? Empire Collectibles reported to me recently that according to the 1975 *Guide* there were five known copies, all with brown pages. In 1977 the *Guide* reported five known with a sixth suspected. (Why suspected?) In 1985 the *Guide* reported seven known, all with brown pages, with an eighth suspected (where did these other two come from?). In 1995 the *Guide* reported eight known with one that was NM (Pay Copy) and seven with brown pages, with a ninth suspected!

In 1995 this issue was not in Top 100 Golden Age books. Huh? In the 2003 *Guide* it was listed as #36 on top 100 Golden Age list (down from #35 the previous year). How can you base the value of this book on sales if it hardly ever is sold and the Pay Copy was undisclosed as to the amount it sold for?

At the Heritage Auction in July 2002 Lot 5194 Sale 803 sold for $20,700 + 15% buyer premium. It carried a CGC *Universal Grade* FN/VF 7.0, but did not have a restored label. Why? Isn't this one of the seven issues that have been restored? Certainly it wasn't the NM issue. There is also a VF/NM universal label copy graded by CGC. Where did this one come from as, excluding the NM "Pay Copy," the remaining seven are all reportedly in similar condition? The CGC Census shows two unrestored (VF/NM and F/VF) and one restored VF-.

I am acquainted with the owner who purchased an issue of *MPFW* but it was disclosed to him in advance that rice paper and glue was added to the book. You can tell that the pages have been reinforced by the way it does not open fully. When opened it retains a sharp "V" shape while held in the palm of

your hand—almost like a gull!

Do the other owners know that their books might have been restored? Stay tuned for the next time one of these hits the auction blocks. Let's see if the "restoration" is disclosed.

• • •

My monthly nod to Disney comics is also in part a current events subject. With the Middle East situation continuously volatile, I wondered if those countries with large Moslem and Jewish populations allowed pig characters to be published in their local Disney books. Both religions strictly prohibit eating pork. According to Disney expert and editor, David Gerstein, pig characters do appear in Arab and/or Hebrew Disney publications.

David's Arab pal Jehan Zetawi did extensive research on this exact subject. Today's Hebrew Disney comics do show pig faced characters appearing in Duckburg and Mouseton. Hydro Felbius appeared in an old Gyro story, "Rain-Dance Reversal" (D 96216) and was really meant as a hippo, but was colored as a pig in many editions of the story, and Israel went right ahead and showed him. Meanwhile, the Arab use of pig characters varies with the country. Publishers in Egypt, which Jehan saw as comparatively liberal, let a pig stay a pig. But in Gulf countries such as Kuwait, where the editors were more conservative, Jehan found McSwine redrawn with a dog's nose and other pig faces becoming unspecified creatures (still rather pig-like, but with nostrils removed from their snouts).

• • •

Some on-line dealers now specialize in "slabbed only" comics. This policy more often than not allows for ***no*** returns due to third party grading. I was alerted recently to one of these dealers who has two pending sales on a couple of books that absolutely astounded me!

One issue is a *Doom Patrol* #86 9.8 NM/MT (Pacific Coast copy) with a sale pending of $3750—the *Guide* lists this at 9.4 at $130. This translates as 28.84X NM 9.4 *Guide*.

The other issue is *Strange Adventures* #180 graded 9.8 NM/MT (Pacific Coast copy) with a sale pending in the amount of $3750. This issue features the 1st appearance and origin of the third tier super-hero Animal Man. This issue books for $245 in NM 9.4. This translates as 15.3X current *Guide*.

One slab-only dealer has even come up with a formula for slabbed book multiples: NM/M 9.8 = 7 to 15 times *Guide* NM value; NM+ 9.6 = 5 to 10 times *Guide* NM value; NM 9.4 = 3 to 6 times *Guide* NM value; NM- 9.2 = 2 to 3 times *Guide* NM value; VF/NM 9.0 = 1 to 2 times *Guide* NM value; VF+ 8.5 = .9 to 1.5 times *Guide* NM value; VF 8.0 = .75 to 1.25 times *Guide* NM value.

What leads collectors to pay a multiple of *Guide* for a slabbed book that is less than NM and is readily available in a high grade for a fraction of the comparable slabbed price? Inquiring minds want to know.

• • •

The motive for collecting should be the passion first, profits second. In contrast to stocks and bonds, it's difficult (some would say impossible) to accurately measure the returns on collectibles as an "asset." That makes them a highly speculative investment. Even the most glamorous corner of collecting, fine art, can be one of the hardest to profit in. In fact, art prices based on the New York auction market fell almost 5% in 2002 according to New York University professors Jianping Mei and Michael Moses.

One of the most commonly heard pieces of advice for collectors is to "buy quality." While there is nothing wrong with bargain hunting eBayers, it often makes sense to pay premium for items with recognized worth, a wide following and the ability to hold value over time. There is less chance that these classics will fall out of favor or lack of buyers should heirs need to sell. Once again, one has to ask that very question about those above mentioned books.

• • •

Our local twice-a-month collectors/retailers group gathered at the local watering hole last week and the discussion got around to CGC's decision to adopt Overstreet grading standards. They asked "What do you do about all of the earlier graded copies, since CGC never published what their grading standards were?" No one had a simple answer for this conundrum.

Another more fanciful and fun loving topic arose about the impact of the latest super-hero movies on the retail comic book retail trade. It was generally agreed upon that the Targets, Wal-Marts and Toys-R-Us toy stores had it all over the little retailer in bringing in the crossover bucks. The larger retail stores had the floor space and advertising dollars to lure the buyers their way. A couple of the local retailers reported that there has been very little impact on back issue sales due to the movie debuts. With the huge glut of related toys, the retailer cannot afford to stick his neck out and speculate on the myriad of toys available from the manufacturers.

The movie discussion took a decided turn when comic-regular and hardcore collector Jose asked the gathering, "Who could ever believe that David Hasselhof was Nick Fury? Could it get any worse than that?" I couldn't help myself: "What about Dolph Lundgren as The Punisher?" From there the discussion turned to who would make a good Nick Fury? Once again Jose nailed it: What about Clint Eastwood (minus maybe 10 15 years)? While Jose was on a roll, he also came up with Ashton Kutcher (*That 70s Show* and Mr. Demi Moore) as the perfect person to portray Plastic Man—why not? More musings from my man Jose after the next meeting of the comic club!

Another war character discussed was Sgt. Rock. This Hollywood stand-in discussion was a bit easier. Greg chimed in that either Robert Mitchum or Jeff Chandler would have been a good Rock, and, again, Clint Eastwood.

• • •

Next time around I'll be looking at some great bargains in trade paperbacks! Until then!

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#242 VG $153 58%
#252 VG $147 53%
#286 VF+ $47 73%
#297 FN $13 48%
#583 NM $15 1.5X

Adventure
#257 VF+ $63 52%
#282 VG $50 96%

Adventures Into the Unknown
#26 GD $16 67%

Adventures of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis
#33 FN $30 90%

Adventures of Young Dr Masters
#1 VF $25 1.25X
#2 VF+ $20 1.54X

Air Fighters
#10 VG+ $100 60%

All-Star
#50 GD $124 Guide

Amazing Spider-Man
#3 GD $335 1.63X
#4 FN $493 96%
#4 VG $150 44%
#8 FN $245 84%
#9 VF/NM $535 44%
#13 VF $256 43%
#14 VG $205 64%
#14 VG $300 93%
#15 VF $380 70%
#51 FN $55 92%
#100 NM $164 60%
#100 VF/NM $70 33%
#100 VF- $41 27%
#100 FN $26 41%
#100 VG+ $15 35%
#102 VF $45 58%
#129 FN $115 1.91X
#129 VF $123 85%
#129 VF+ $210 1.45X
#129 VF/NM $190 94%
#135 VF/NM $53 82%
#201 NM $13.5 96%
#202 NM $13.5 96%
#214 NM $4.25 33%
#215 NM $4 33%
#216 NM $4 33%
#223 NM $3 30%
#224 NM $3 30%
#225 NM $3 30%
#238 NM $63.5 79%
#239 NM $29 64%
#244 NM $9.5 68%
#245 NM $9.5 68%
#300 VF/NM $60 87%
#300 NM $85 Guide
#300 NM- $56 65%
#300 NM- $51 60%
#300 VF $31 58%
#300 VF+ $43 81%
#300 VF- $29 55%

Aquaman
#1 GD $124 1.85X

Archie's Rival Reggie
#1 VG- $80 53%

Atom
#1 VG $127 87%
#7 FN $50 57%

Avengers
#9 VG $45 1.02X
#52 NM $50 1.11X

Batman
#34 FN $162 49%
#77 FN $99 54%
#107 VG $72 84%
#123 VG $50 83%
#124 VF $42 27%
#128 VG $50 89%
#171 NM $415 79%
#171 VF $186 67%
#234 VF- $40 41%
#155 VG+ $36 58%
#200 VF- $54 57%
#232 VF/NM $110 Guide

Battle for a Three Dimensional World
#1 NM $25 2.5X

Beany and Cecil
#3 FN $35 1.17X

Blackhawk
#13 GD $87 1.05X
#65 FN $80 1.06X

Brave & Bold
#28 VG $431 56%
#30 VG+ $230 83%
#34 VG+ $145 39%
#35 GD $45 96%
#37 VG+ $100 2.17X
#42 VG $36 62%

Captain Marvel Adventures
#45 FN $48 40%
#48 VG $55 74%

Captain America
#113 VF $50 91%

Captain Savage
#3 NM $15.5 77%
#4 NM $20 Guide
#9 NM $36 1.8X
#10 NM $26 1.3X

Challengers of the Unknown
#1 GD $69 37%

Cisco Kid (1944)
#1 VG+ $42.5 82%

Comics on Parade
#14 FN $50 39%

Daredevil
#100 NM- $35 1.16X

Detective
#82 VG $140 77%
#102 VG $105 46%
#148 GD- $35.75 61%
#198 FN $43 28%
#212 GD $52.25 1.02X
#227 VG $51 46%
#229 GD+ $80 1.45X
#235 VG+ $105 82%
#307 VG $14 88%
#370 VF/NM $45 92%
#443 VG/NM $45 92%

Dr. Strange (2nd series)
#1 NM $56 80%

Doll Man
#1 GD $275 56%

Eightball (1st print)
#1 NM $15 1.25X

80 Page Giant
#8 VG $60 94%

Fables
#2 NM $15 3X

Famous Funnies
#8 GD $128 90%
#13 VG $100 65%

Fantastic Four
#4 VF $1814 89%
#6 GD+ $160 1.15X
#6 VF $748 63%
#7 VF $515 78%
#8 VF $612 93%
#9 VF $597 91%
#11 VF $722 1.39X
#19 VF $237 1.03X
#121 NM- $22 73%

Feature
#65 FN $54 75%
#83 VG- $25 78%

Feature Films
#3 VF- $300 74%

Fight
#64 VG $30 68%
#72 VG $30 79%

Flash
#105 FN $652 56%
#107 FN- $113 53%
#109 GD- $35 74%
#110 FN $202 60%
#123 VG+ $162 74%

Flash Annual
#1 VG $52 70%

Flash Comics
#73 VG $144 94%

Forever People
#1 NM $20 5 27%

From Hell (1st print)
#1 NM $25 1 25X

Giant-Size X-Men
#1 VG- $110 80%

Gorgo
#3 FN $20 55%
#23 VF $35 1.2X

Green Lantern (SA)
#1 FN $760 1.1X
#1 GD $132 58%
#2 VF $665 1 28X
#2 VG+ $61 50%
#3 FN- $79 66%
#59 VF/NM $123 61%
#80 VF/NM $38 68%

[concludes on facing page]

Michael Tierney

Collector's Edition - North Little Rock, AR
The Comic Book Store - Little Rock , AR
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Back issue sales of older comics continue to generate heat especially in light of the fact that many classic comics from the last thirty years are now cheaper than today's new comic cover prices.

In spite of a blockbuster year of comic related movies, this exposure hasn't translated into greater sales for new comics. But, in contrast, back issue sales have exploded. I find it interesting that in the midst of the current debate on whether retailers need a new ratings system to provide a point of sale notification of contents on comic covers, that I've had several customers close their new comics reserve files. They are now restricting their purchases exclusively to older comics—all of which are Code approved.

When the *Batman* movie debuted in 1989 it caused a phenomenon of skyrocketing sales. While this summer was disappointing in comparison to '89 I believe that this is mainly due to short-sighted short printing by publishers. Backing up this hypothesis is *Batman* once again. The Jim Lee run on *Batman* from #608 to #619 has been blistering hot and despite heavy overprinting continues to sell out. Where most runs start out strong and then tail off, this particular storyline has gained strength and momentum as it continues toward its conclusion. With #618 being the last issue on the shelf, #608 is selling for $12 in NM. For the last couple of years DC has been outselling Marvel in my market—thanks again in part to their aggressive program of overprinting. Occasionally Marvel makes a run at attempting to reassert their former dominance in the marketplace. But each time Marvel draws close DC makes another surge.

Green Lantern (GA)
#2 VG $1000 78%

Hansi, The Girl Who Loved the Swastika
#nn(1973) C $25 80%

Happy Comics
#19 FN $19 79%

Hawkman (1st series)
#1 FN $108 72%
#4 VF+ $150 1.2X
#7 VF $25 36%
#10 VF $10 16%
#13 VF $10 20%
#16 VF/NM $18.5 38%
#18 VF/NM $16 33%
#23 VF/NM $11.5 23%

In other activity we sold a run of Gold Key *Magnus Robot Fighter* #1 through #9 for $95. The covers were beautiful, but at some time in the past a hungry child had nibbled off the corners of many interior pages. Other *Magnus* sales from the same collection were #10 FN $14 and #26 VF $12.75.

As usual it's hard to keep black and white comic magazines in stock. Recent examples are *Vampirella Magazine* #3 (scarce) GD $35 and *Marvel Super Action* #1 (early Punisher origin) VG+ $22.

Examples of **Marvel sales** from the Silver Age through the Eighties are: *Amazing Spider-Man* #42 VG $33, #128 VF $12.75, #194 VF $19, *Giant-Size* #6 NM $16; *Avengers* #22 FN $17, #23 VG $16, #25 VG+ $18, #26 VG $15, #53 VF $19, #78 FN- $17, #80 (Intro Red Wolf) NM $18; *Fantastic Four* #6 GD- $195, #7 VG $125, #8 VG $110, #9 VG- $125, #10 $GD+ $110, #45 (intro/1st Inhumans) VG+ $35; *Journey Into Mystery* #103 (1st Enchantress) VG $25.75; *Incredible Hulk* #102 GD $18; *Secret Wars* #8 NM $28; *Tales to Astonish* #39 VG $64, #41 VG- $49, #55 GD+ $23, #56 VG $18, #58 VG $20, #83 GD+ $20; *Uncanny X-Men* #26 VG+ $29, #49 VG $19, #80 FN+ $15, #84 VF $28.75, #129 FN+ (intro Kitty Pryde start of the Dark Phoenix Saga and sold the week *X-Men II* hit the theaters) $25, #131 NF $12, #140 VF+ $19, #212 NM $22, #248 NM $24.75; *Wolverine* (Volume II) #1 VG $25, #2 VG $15, #10 (flashback of 1st fight with Sabretooth) NM $30.

DC Silver Age sales provided our top dollar sale for this report reflecting their current dominance in the new comics market. *Action Comics* #226 GD $22, #227 VG $55; *Brave and the Bold* #28 (1st Justice League of America) FN+ $845, *Green Lantern* #40 FN $85; *Justice League of America* #2 VF $199.75; *Mystery In Space* #53 (Adam Strange begins) VG $175, #61 VF $50.

Ron Capitini

Bruce Ellsworth
eBay ID: Classic-Cool

"Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of men . only the Shadow knows." He also knows that of all the Golden Age pulp heroes, if you were to put them in a ring and have a Royal Rumble, Doc Savage would be last hero standing. My Good God! I cannot believe the incredible sales and sell-through I have had with this golden-skinned Golden Age super-hero! His own book and shared space with *The Shadow Comics*; all have sold at *Guide* or better! But even more astonishing is they sold not but two days after San Diego and online.

This has been a summer for sales! Especially for the comic market—the best I have seen in a while. Very strong is Golden Age Wonder Woman, *Flash Comics,* along with Timely/Marvel *Mystery Comics* all selling at *Guide* or better. I know you might be saying well that's a given but take a second and think August, online, and all during the Biggest Comic Convention in the world—now that's unbelievable!

You see, we could not make it out to San Diego this year because a dear friend to the industry, Bruce Ellsworth, had a quadruple bypass five days before

the big event. So San Diego took second place. I just listed books that would normally grace the back wall at the show thinking they probably would not sell due to the fact that every collector was at the con – surprise! Not only did they move, but at better than book value! The only thing stronger is Bruce's heart! He managed to heal quicker than Wolverine. Heck, he wanted to leave for the convention after being in the hospital before the big operation that weekend. The freaking guy is a super-hero. I'm truly humbled by his might and fortitude!

Golden Age: *All-Flash* #14 VG- $175; *Charlie Chan* #3 FN $140; *Doc Savage Comics* #1 VG- $900; *Flash Comics* #61 FN- $240, *Marvel Mystery Comics* #36 GD- $200, #69 FN+ $500; *Shadow Comics* #1 VG- $800, #2 GD/VG $400, #3 G+ $205; *Wonder Woman* #17 FN- $320, #28 GD- $70; *Cloak & Dagger* #1 VG- $55; *Ellery Queen* #1 FN $140.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #50 G/VG $40; *Avengers* #12 VF $82; *Fantastic Four* #112 FN $25; *Journey into Mystery* #112 VG-$50; *Metamorpho* #1VF $50.

Bronze Age: *Marvel Spotlight* #5 VG- $40.

Greg White

Comics and Collectibles
17 W. Monument Ave.
Kissimmee, Florida
407-870-0400

Hello from Central Florida. We have been off for a couple months and it is nice to get back to our normal schedule. Our summer travels brought us to the Chicago Comic Con. Having attended this show a few times over the years we could see that attendance in the Golden Age and Silver Age area was not as great as past years.

Sales were average based on our conversation with many dealers. The big hype is still those silly slabbed and graded books. Some "investors" are still dumb enough to pay multiples of *Guide* when similar issues in the same condition (or better) are available for much less.

As the old saying goes "there's one born every minute." 'Nuff said about that. Demand continues for wartime Golden Age covers. Unfortunately those books don't come our way every day Silver Age demand remains at a reasonable level with certain titles leading the way as always (*Batman*, *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Showcase*).

Silver Age 1955-1969: A couple of collections came to us this summer—Silver Age DC and Marvel and a full *Amazing Spider-Man* run. Our customer demand for Spider-Man continues to be strong. Thankfully we are selling more lower- and mid-grade books. The near-mint-only collectors tend to be a pain as we seldom have what they want at the price they want to pay. Most of our customers actually read and enjoy their books Sales. *Amazing Spider Man* #9 VF $950, #12 VF $550; *X Men* #1 VG $900; *Detective* #298 FN $50; *Flash* #105 GD $300; *Batman* #100 FN $500.

Golden Age 1933-1955: We only purchased one group of lower-grade Golden Age this month—a couple hundred books from 1942-1949. Good filler material. Demand for Timelys continues. Wartime covers (especially Hitler) are popular. I was recently offered, for a second time, a large run of 1939-1945 comics that had to be in the worst overall condition I have ever seen for an entire group. Many key issues are included however many of them are unsellable in their present condition. Most of the books were in the poor-fair range. Too bad. Many No. 1 issues and first appearance books. The collector thought that he could get much more than what he has been offered. He still has the books and we are still hopeful of picking up the collection at a reasonable rate. This is the second time I have seen these books, however, once again, we could not get together. It was too bad to see so many early Golden Age in such sorry shape. Oh well! Sales: *Batman* #5 GD/VG $750; *Superman* #61 VG $250; *All-Winners* #14 VG $450; *Archie* #6 GD $50; *World's Finest* #3 VF $2000; *Superboy* #10 GD $45.

Original Art and Toys: As always there was a great deal of overpriced art at Chicago Some fine pieces that did not budge all weekend due to ridiculous pricing. Some pieces had that aggravating sign "For Trade" hung on them. Why don't these guys just leave the art at home if they really are not interested in selling. I bought a group of 1950s Archie comic book pages for resale. Not much else. We recently purchased a group of 1970s model kits unbuilt in original boxes. Quite a few TV related kits. Sales: *Flintstones* cel $50; Capt. Caveman drawing $25; Corgi Batmobile loose $50; Robin Aurora in box $150

That is all for this month. When you visit Walt Disney World please stop by and say hello!

Doug Sulipa's Comic World

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We had a busy summer, better than expected. The emerging trend has been notable: scarce Alternate comics of the 1975-1990 period. By far the most requested of all comics in the last three months have been *Cerebus the Aardvaark* #1 (1st Print) and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #1 (1st print). There are almost none to be found. The current market value on these is between 200-300% *Guide* in *any* condition. We expect CGC 9.4 copies would bring in the $1500+ each range. *Cerebus* #2-21 are also in demand; *Albedo* #2 is equally hot with the above titles, but remains mysteriously low in

Guide considering VF/NM copies have been selling for $500 up for well over a year now.

Other Alternates getting hotter include: *Grendel* (Comico) #1-3, *Mangazine* #1, *Ninja High School* #1 and others. Considering the low print runs of many of these comics, even small demand can dry up all supply in very short order.

Scooby Doo (Gold Key) #1 remains at the top of many want lists and easily brings 200-300% *Guide*. Notable good and still undervalued sellers: *Thor* (Marvel) #332, #333 (2-part Dracula s); #333 (Dracula-c); *Dr. Strange* (1974) #14 (Dracula-c/s); *Amazing Spider Man* #129 is red hot and even on eBay unslabbed copies bring over *Guide* with CGC copies bringing good multiples.

The other early appearances of Punisher in *Amazing Spider-Man* #134, 135, 161, 162; *Marvel Preview* #2; *GS Spidey* #4, etc., are hot too. The shortage of 20 cent era Marvels continues, especially in high grades. Strict high-grade copies bring well over *Guide*, slabbed or not. The most requested Marvel Keys remain: *Marvel Spotlight* #2, 5; *Amazing Adventures* #11; *Amazing Spider-Man* #129; *Hulk* #180, 181; *GS X-Men* #1. On the increase in demand are: *Defenders* #1; *Sub-Mariner* #34, 35; *Marvel Feature* #1-3.

Marvel 1970s to early 1980s magazines have finally seen a good rise in demand, especially for *strict* high-grade copies. Many are trying to "scoop" the CGC-able graded copies, while still cheap. It will be interesting to see how CGC handles grading mags, as they are traditionally much tougher in strict NM than their color comic counterparts.

The KEY Marvel mags to grab now include; *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* #1, 2, 14, 17, 28; *Dracula Lives* #1-3, 10; *Foom* #1-3, 11; *Haunt of Horror* #1; *Monsters Unleashed* #1-4; *Rampaging Hulk* #1, 2, 10; *Planet of the Apes* #1, 21-29; *Pussycat* #1(rare); *Savage Tales* #1; *Savage Sword of Conan* #1-10; *Spectacular Spider-Man* (1969 Mag); *Tales of the Zombie* #1; and *Vampire Tales* #1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9. The Marvel Adult cartoon mags (*Cartoon Capers*, *Cartoons and Gags*, *Cartoon Laughs*, *Laugh Parade*, etc) are hard to find in *any* grade and sell fast. Those with the Pussycat strip, or Bill Ward art, typically sell for about double the others. Additionally, we were virtually sold out on all Skywald Mags (*Nightmare*, *Psycho* and *Scream*), but just obtained the highest grade collection I've seen in years. These have been steadily on the rise in the *Guide* and demand has never been higher.

Some cool items that have gone unnoticed: *Archie Giant Series Magazine* #26 (6/64) and #32 (6/65) are both Betty & Veronica spectaculars, with classic *all pin-up* Dan DeCarlo-c/a; *Career Girl Romances* #39 (4/1967) 1st App "Tiffany Sinn, C.I.A. Sweetheart, Undercover Agent"-c/s, 8 pgs, art by Luis Dominguel, next appears in *Secret Agent* (formerly *Sarge Steel*) #10; *Porky Pig* (Whitman) #99 (11-12/1980) = very low print; rare and might be the scarcest of the Whitman 8-12/1980 issues, if it exists at all.

Selling for the Captain Canada stories (BTW: *not* listed in the *Guide*): *Fuddle Duddle* (JRD Publishing Co, Canada; B&W Comics parody and political humor magazine, all low print run, all spoof Maggie and Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau; #1, #2 25 cents, #3 30 cents, #1-3 32 pages, #4-5 52 pages; #4, #5 50-cent cover prices) #1 (1971), #2, #3 (1st app Wilmer Freemish), #4 (Robert Stanfield leader of PC's; 2nd app Wilmer Freemish; Nixon and Spiro Agnew-s; Capt. Canada 10-page story 1st app? Evans-s/Berneche-a; Captain Canada back-c); #5 (1971/72; Capt Canada-c; Nudity; Captain Canada 12-page story; Nixon parody); *Katy Keene Special* (1983/90) #12 (Spider Man Parody); *Reggie's Wise Guy Jokes* #56 60 (probably do not exist); *Oui* magazine August 1977 issue (Published by Hugh Hefner/Playboy Press) this magazine has the now infamous Arnold Schwarzenegger interview. The interview is five pages in length, plus a bonus color painted pin-up of Arnold Schwarzenegger, making six pages in total. Arnold was the world famous bodybuilding champion is those days and surely did not anticipate running for governor of California in those innocent days of 26 years ago! He talks about strippers, drugs and training, he uses profane language, and *more*. Currently one of the hottest items on eBay (see eBay item number: 3547213378).

The *rarest* of all EC comics, these are white *hot* and extremely desirable because it was highlighted in "Tales Too Terrible to Tell"; *Weird SuspenStories* (Superior Comics Pub; Canada; 10-12/1951; color) #1-3 (Hybrid Canadian Variant editions of EC's *Crime SuspenStories* #1-3; by law "Crime" was not allowed in title of Canadian comics; no copies known in FN or better; very rare; less than five copies of each known).

Early 1960s Archie titles had many SF/Horror cover issues and these issues are *hot*; (known SF/Horror cover issues *Archie Comics* #123-125, 127; *Archie Giant Series Magazine* #17, 19; *Archie's Girls Betty & Veronica* #70, 73, 75, 77, 79, 80; *Archie's Joke Book* #58, 59, 64; *Archie's Madhouse Comics* #6, 8, 11, 13, 15-26, 29, 35, 36, 38, 42, 43, 48, 51, 58, 60; *Madhouse Annuals* #1 (SF-c), #4 (Horror-c), #5(SF-c); *Archie's Pal Jughead* #77-82, 85, 86, 88; *Archie's Pal 'N Gals* #18/*Katy Keene* #61, 62; *Laugh Comics* #128-135, 137, 139; *Life with Archie* (SF/Horror cover issues) #11, 35, 39, 162, plus #9 (Robot-c), #12 (Dinosaur-c); *Little Archie* #18, 20, 22; *Pep Comics* #151-154, 156-158.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

[continued from page 6]
their sources in the body of their articles.

Jim Amash
Winston-Salem, NC

Feldman on Amash

Russ and readers, I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who contacted me regarding the article on Lev Gleason. Many compliments, which are appreciated, and some choice bits of information—particularly from the great Dan Stevenson.

If Lev Gleason's illegitimate children, retired mobsters who did business with him, or anyone, for that matter, who has something to add, are reading this any new pieces of the puzzle would be most welcome.

There were a couple of errors that ended up in the printed piece. For the record, Arthur Bernhardt's partner was named Morris Latzen. A substantial amount of information came my way as the magazine was closing, which unfortunately could not get incorporated into the piece on time.

But most grievously, in my haste to sanitize what I had originally said about Charles Biro (there was some last minute hope his daughters would be contacting me) I plugged in a bit of gossip gleaned from Jim Amash's exceptionally in-depth interview with Gill Fox, which appeared in *Alter Ego* #12. Not only did I screw up on the details of one anecdote told by Mr. Fox, but I failed to properly credit Jim for a full paragraph taken directly from the interview.

So if anyone got the impression I'm a thorough and professional journalist—you might want to think again.

Mike Feldman
Toronto, Canada

Another star in Bails' crown

Thank you for highlighting the remarkable comic book archives at Michigan State University (*CBM* 103).

I'm surprised, however, that the article didn't mention the significant contributions made to the collection by Jerry Bails, one of the founding fathers of modern comic book fandom. Through Mr. Bail's efforts, an exhaustive collection of Golden Age comics was captured on black and white microfilm.

Though the image quality of the material is somewhat uneven and specific titles are scattered among different reels, the collection still represents one of the most concise records of the Golden Age.

Christopher Martin
St. Clair Shores, MI

English re-issues

Congratulations on the recent redesign, very eye-catching logo, which is after all the point of embarking on a redesign in the first place I guess! Anyway, having just read the editorial in the latest issue (#103), I felt that I had to add my two pence worth concerning foreign comics producing material unseen by the native audience for those particular characters. The Disney situation isn't entirely unique; it's been going on for years over here in Britain, and all thanks to Stan's brainwave in setting up Marvel UK back in 1972.

In trying to keep up with the then crazy weekly deadlines this led to Planet of the Apes stories which ran for more pages than in the later US editions; six American-created Star Wars stories by Goodwin and Claremont which had to be dropped from the U.S. book to allow Empire to begin earlier than planned; and much later on, a whole raft of UK creators finished off various Thundercats stories, in varying stages of completion, left over from the American color comic.

And then, of course, there's all the those UK created Hulk, Black Knight, Nick Fury and Ant Man (!!) strips that never saw print in the States, and not forgetting all the US and UK drawn incarnations of Captain Britain too. Need I say more? Well, I have to declare a certain interest, seeing that I'm still working on the book that looks at the 30-plus year history of the UK division, and indexes almost every strip that ever saw print, both new material and reprints alike. I can certainly promise you that it'll be a biggy when it does come out. Keep you're eyes peeled, it's a joint venture with ex-Marvel UK Editor Dez Skinn, now publisher of Comics International. Ooopps, sorry, didn't mean to turn that into a plug, honest!

Fascinating stuff about the cover differences between those old Alan Class reprints and the 'original' Atlas covers too that'll annoy collectors who might have passed those over for many years now. And, speaking of reprints before I dash, can anyone tell me the exact title, issue number, and the number of strip pages for the Whitman comic that ran the *Gremlins* movie adaptation? It was repackaged by Marvel in Britain, with a new Mick Austin cover, but I've yet to pin down the exact American issue that ran it. Thanks.

Rob Kirby
England

Diz must be de place

I can't begin to tell you how much I enjoyed your Disney Comics issue (#103). The Disney Comics articles in particular were superb—enjoyable and educational in every respect. But it was the David Gerstein masterpiece, "Back to Long Ago," that really floored me. Not only was it a trip through memory lane for me, but it also provided a lot of information that I was not aware of. Thanks, David, for all the research you did on this! The wealth of European Disney comics still out there certainly cheered me with hope that they will see print in the US through the new Gemstone line.

I would also like to suggest (John Clark, are you listening?) that Gemstone also venture into one other comic line: Little Lulu. I have all the Little Lulu Library volumes, but I would love to see Gemstone pick up with the series where the LLL left off—even if they have to reprint in black and white. Thanks for listening.

Pat Premo
Allegany, NY

All comics, some of the time

I have read the "Marketplace Mail" of *CBM* #104 and I am surprised by the pressure exerted by some readers insisting in the exclusive dedication of *CBM* to comic books. For me, a

"continental" European, as I have read the comic strips mainly as comic book collections it is difficult to understand this "apartheid." I appreciate the professionals involved in the production of comics (all kind) and I am very curious and reverent about their life and accomplishments. As you have mentioned somewhere, most of those professionals are working sometimes in comic books, sometimes in comic strips, sometimes in animation, etc., during their life and I like to know the details, many times obscured, of their opus without making a distinction between comic books, strips, cartoons, advertisements, etc. For this reason, I appreciate enormously the works of A. Becattini, M. Nolan, R. C. Harvey, etc., all of them researchers fighting for the details and the discovery of artists/writers/comics…that without their research they would be forgotten irremediably.

Your magazine is a reference point for me and I appreciate a lot the articles and opinions on the comics (all kind) world, always looking for enhancing the reader's knowledge and never restraining it. Many thanks. My best regards,

Jaime Echevarria
Vizcaya, Spain

Jaime, you will not be surprised to hear that I totally agree with everything in your letter. We have to remember that the first 83 issues of CBM *were inspired by and created by Gary Carter and his wife Lisa and their crew out in California. Gary's primary interest has always been comic books, specifically DC comic books, and naturally when he was publishing and editing* CBM *the articles were weighted in that direction. And, also naturally, the readership of* CBM *has grown to expect coverage of Golden and Silver Age comic books, almost to the exclusion of anything else. The key word for me there is "almost."*

When Steve Geppi and John Snyder asked me to take over the reins of CBM, *they knew that my interests were much broader, and that I have been a major collector of newspaper Sunday pages for as long as I have been collecting anything, right behind EC comics. Born in 1937, I was at the perfect age to enjoy ECs when they came out in the early 1950s, and by then I had "outgrown" superhero comics. I also got in on the last gasp of newspaper comic sections of 16, 24, or 32 pages, with full page versions of* Tarzan, Prince Valiant, Flash Gordon, *etc., and I remember going over to my Grandad Cochran's house to read his Sunday St Louis* Post Dispatch *comic sections in the early 1940s before wartime paper shortages and advertising demands caused all the great Sunday strips to shrink to half pages and then to third pages. My love for the old newspaper comics has led me to go back and look at the entire genre, starting in the 1890s, and to study these comics as a developing art form unique to America and to the 20th Century.*

Aficionados of the comics who are still on the sunny side of 50 have never lived through a period when newspaper comics enjoyed greater popularity than comic books, and the newspaper comics of the 1960s and later are so pale in comparison to those of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s that these younger readers have just not paid much attention to newspaper comics. But since the history of comic art is a continuous tapestry which started in the last part of the 19th Century but had its roots in the early part of that Century, the "old professor" in me feels a need to educate our CBM *readers about great comics, no matter where or when they appeared. And don't fear that we have abandoned coverage of newspaper comics we haven't. I just decided to devote a few issues to comic books to regain some of the readers we lost when we ventured out on some of these "side trips." As Popeye might say, "Comics is comics," whether they appear in a saddle stitched 7"x10" size, in a full size newspaper section, in an old issue of* Puck *magazine, or scrawled on the wall of a cave in France.*

Russ Cochran

COMIC BOOK
MARKETPLACE
BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

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Inspiration Central—Mark Millar

[continued from page 14]

But then, Alan Moore. I suppose it sounds awful, but he made you forget about the other guys, because he was such a level above what everyone else was doing. I think it must have been awful working in comics at that time, because suddenly this guy came out who was like an evolutionary step ahead of everyone else. It must have been so depressing for them. I'd have hated him.

It's kind of like there's a family tree in UK comics. Alan Moore's the pioneer, you know? He's the guy who came in before many of us and changed the industry. Even for Americans, he changed an American industry. And then there were the guys who came in behind him, guys like Neil Gaiman, Jamie Delano and Grant Morrison. And those guys were each called "the new Alan Moore." And then there were the guys who came in off the back of those guys.

You know, I was very influenced by Grant. Our styles are very different, but our attitude was quite similar. And the fact that here's a guy who lived in my part of the world, a guy who actually lived ten miles from where I lived, and got work in New York was a *gigantic* influence. Because you realized that it's actually possible—with fax machines and FedEx, you can do it. So that was a gigantic influence, and through the '90s we were great friends.

I'd say that Garth Ennis, myself and Warren Ellis were the next wave of guys who came afterwards and were influenced by those guys.

CBM: What were some of the aspects of the work of these different folks which captured your imagination, and really stuck with you?

Millar: As a kid, I don't think you're so much interested in dialogue. Maybe a *little* on characterization, but as a kid, I think it's all plot. The cover is what entices you into a comic as a child. If that story idea is encapsulated in one visual and ten words on the cover, so, if you see a cover where it's like Superman getting married or something and it says, "How can this be?"—*that* is what is going to make you buy the comic and get into the comic. It's pure idea. At an early stage, before you're very interested in language, I think you're more interested in the idea. In some ways, as a teenager you become more interested in language, and characterization, and dialogue, because your character is unformed as a child and an adult is just an adult to you. You don't actually think about adults as being particularly distinct, you know? So I think, in a very crude idea way, you're influenced as a child. That idea just seem fascinating.

Cary Bates, in particular, is a guy who never gets any real recognition. But every month he always comes up with a great spin on Superman. Nobody else was reading comics, but I was always very fond of them.

CBM: You mentioned that you discovered Alan Moore's work when you hit your teens. What was it about his work that kept you reading comics past an age when most kids stop?

Millar: I think it's the sophistication. At an age when you want to give up comics, because you're embarrassed by them, [you need something like that]. When I was thirteen I felt as if I was morally justified to read them because Moore gave it a gravitas that nobody else had brought it, and he actually realized that the stuff he was doing was at least as sophisticated as television or movies. And comics, I don't think, had ever really had that before, and certainly not on a monthly basis. And we actually all became little crusaders, because we were desperate to tell everyone how good this genre was.

Moore was great like that. He was like Stan Lee. In the same way that Stan Lee inflamed a generation of kids in the sixties to put burning crosses outside DC fans' houses, Moore did the same. Moore's [work,] this stuff was some of the best material actually out there—whether it's comics, books, or whatever. You just wanted to champion it for him. You were passing all this stuff out to your friends.

Moore was like that. Moore was such a force in comics that you forget what an influence he was, but in the eighties he was colossal.

The Greatest Comic Book Ever

[continued from page 15]

If you had to grade my comic, you'd honestly have to consider giving it a negative number. It would trigger a seizure in a CGC grader. But the nice thing is that no one—*no one*—will ever have to grade it. It will have to be pried out of my cold, dead hands. I am rightly proud of the run of *Amazing Spider-Man* that I have amassed. I am shocked that my father had the foresight and wherewithal to buy his studious young son, while in junior high, a startlingly nice copy of *AS #1* that my local comic dealer had saved for me. My last "hole" was that Black Widow issue, number 86, which I bought with a hideous spine roll a few years later, because I just couldn't take it anymore. I carefully sought out previous back issues in the best possible condition, not because I thought they'd be worth more in the future, but because they just looked nicer. But I couldn't wait for a nicer 86. That number taunted me for years. When I saw a copy that looked like its previous owner rolled it up to swat the dog, I was blind to everything but that number in the little square box on the cover.

I refuse to upgrade my #102.

I've thought about it. And if one day I find a copy that looks so crisp—that looks like the one I first saw on that shelf at Thrifty. I might bite.

But for now, my #102 is my touchstone.

I'm sitting here, typing this on my PowerBook while on call as a trauma surgeon, waiting for the next gunshot wound victim to come in.

I was a nerdy, book-smart kid who wore glasses who, on thankfully rare occasions, got beat up by not-so-nerdy Neanderthals and teased mercilessly by various and sundry school classmates.

Peter Parker meant a whole lot to that kid.

That kid grew up, married a ridiculously hot redhead (her name's *not* Mary Jane but she *does* have an Aunt May), and my "superpower," if you will, is to cut people open and fix 'em.

Not quite web-slinging, but I come in handy from time to time.

43 That Wonderful Year

by Michelle Nolan

What's So Wonderful About It?

By 1943, the way most collectors reckon, the Golden Age of comic books was still going strong as super-heroes contributed to the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II. In retrospect and reality, though, there already were plenty of indications the Golden Age was nearing its end.

Not the financial Golden Age of comics, mind you, but rather the First Heroic Age, as fandom founder Jerry Bails once so astutely dubbed it.

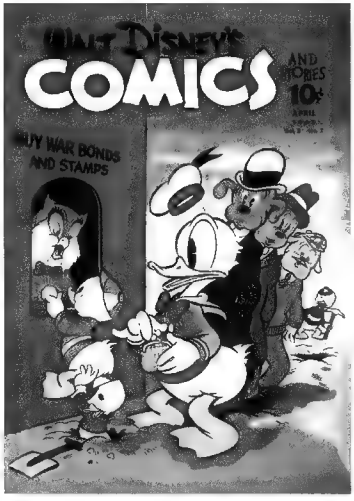
Both production and sales reached new highs in 1943, which marked the end of the first decade of the modern newsstand comic book. For the first time, more than 1,000 newsstand comic books were produced—1,051, to be exact.

With World War II at its midpoint, sales continued to increase as members of the Armed Forces joined the legion of fans who bought comics for cheap, quick relaxation. Dan Stevenson's issue by issue database shows that for the first time three companies produced more than 100 comics DC (142), Dell (114) and Fawcett (111) Marvel (92) and Quality (69) were the other companies that continued to emerge as major market forces, along with many relatively minor but highly collectible players such as Fiction House, Street & Smith, MLJ and Nedor.

The most important numbers involving comics in 1943, however, were 68 and zero. Comic books dropped from 68 pages (including covers) to either 60 or 52. Meanwhile, the number of iconic characters created that year was zero! That's right, zero.

With comic book sales increasing and so many creative personnel serving in the Armed Forces—and with super-heroes still overwhelming the newsstands—there was no pressing need for new characters or concepts.

By far the most important comic book event of 1943 was the appearance of the first Carl Barks 10-page Donald Duck story in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #31 (Apr 1943). That was The Duck Man's second comic book story, following Donald's full-length 1942 *Four Color* #9, "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold."



April, 1943.

Only two months earlier, one of DC's earliest cover-featured super-heroes, The Hourman, ended his Golden Age career in *Adventure* #83 (Feb 1943), becoming the first major DC costumed character to depart. I'll bet very few Golden Age collectors realize that regular Barks duck stories did not begin until after The Hourman was gone! The Hourman was first cover-featured in *Adventure* #48 (Mar 1940) and followed on the covers of #50 and 52-59, all by Bernard Baily but lasting only through the Feb 1941 issue. They're wonderfully nifty covers and all valued at more than $200 by *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* in "good."

Of the 32 new titles introduced in 1943 (not counting the Dell *Four-Color* series), only *Plastic Man* and *Hopalong Cassidy* were significant successes for at least a decade. Even those titles did not really start until after the war ended. Fawcett's *Hopalong Cassidy* #1 was essentially a one-shot since the series did not begin regular publication until 1946 and Quality's *Plastic Man* did not embark on a regular schedule until #3 in 1946 after #1-2 were published under the obscure Vital imprint in 1943-44. *Hoppy* ran for 135 issues for Fawcett and DC through 1959 and *Plastic Man* for 64 issues through 1956.

Some collectors would include *Mary Marvel* in 1943 debuts, although she was introduced in *Captain Marvel* #18 (Dec 1942) before beginning regular publication in *Wow Comics* #9 (Jan 1943). The two humor anthologies each had 99-issue runs into early 1955 before the American Comics Group replaced them with short-lived humor titles. A few other titles that debuted in 1943, such as *Headline* from Price and *Don Winslow* from Fawcett, enjoyed respectable but not spectacular success.

DC's first original humor title, *All-Funny Comics*, debuted in 1943. Even though it ran only 23 issues through 1948, it set the stage for a plethora of nicely done, largely under-rated DC humor titles to follow.

At least a handful of super-heroes (or revivals) both arrived and departed from

Hourman in his glory, #52 (Jul 40). By #82 (below, April, 1943) he wasn't even mentioned on the cover.

the comic-book stage in every year through the end of the Golden Age and beyond. The only significant costumed characters to debut in 1943, however, were Marvel's Miss America, DC's Liberty Belle and Quality's Captain Triumph. None of the three became icons, but they were decent supporting characters.

Captain Triumph appeared only in *Crack Comics* #27-62 (Jan 1943-Sep 1949) but enjoyed cover-feature status in every issue. Liberty Belle debuted as a backup strip in *Boy Commandos* #1-2 (Winter 1942-43 and Spring 1943) before continuing in the same status for four years in the monthly *Star Spangled Comics* #20-68 (May 1943-May 1947).

The best-remembered creation of 1943, however, was one of the last of the patriotic costumed heroes—Miss America, who was Marvel's answer to Wonder Woman and Mary Marvel and a host of lesser-known heroines.

Marvel never met a hot concept it couldn't duplicate with skill and Miss America followed that tradition well. Oddly, long after Miss America herself disappeared, her title continued, first as a girls' anthology knockoff of the likes of *Calling All Girls*, then as a successful teen humor title cover-featuring Patsy Walker.

Miss America debuted in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #49 (Nov 1943) and ran in short backup stories in every issue through #85 (Feb 1948). She appeared in the first five issues of her own title and was a member of the All Winners Squad in *All Winners* #19 and 21. She appeared in 52 Golden Age stories during a five-year run.

Using the late Howard Keltner's magnificent index to Golden Age super-hero comics, I checked the page counts for every company during 1943. In a gradual process that began at mid-year, every company cut the page count on almost all of its 10-cent comics by either 8 or 16 pages until there were hardly any 68-page issues left on the stands during 1944.

Most companies published 60-page comics for a few months. DC did it for a little more than a year and Quality continued the practice on several of its titles into 1947. Most titles, however, quickly dropped the count to 52 or even 36. The 68-page, 10-cent format was never to appear again except a year-long, highly ballyhooed 1946-47 experiment in Lev Gleason's three titles—*Daredevil, Boy* and *Crimes Does Not Pay*. Almost as soon as World War II ended, Gleason went back to 68-page issues for about a year, but he was the only publisher who did. He tried to make great hay of this on the covers, in much the same way Dell endlessly bragged of its 52-page "all comics" productions during 1953-1954, before dropping to 36-page issues.

The primary reason for the first comic book page cuts may well have been wartime paper shortages, but I suspect the publishers were not unhappy over producing fewer pages for the same dime. Considering how well comics sold in that era, the publishers surely wished for more paper, but the cut from 68 pages saved them money on both production and creative costs.

Look at it this way: Do you think DC was happier producing 142 comics with mostly 68 or 60 pages in 1943, or the 303 issues the company pumped out in 1953, when the page count for 10-cent comics had been reduced to either 36 or 44 pages (including covers). My guess is

Miss America on her first issue (1944). She debuted inside Marvel Mystery #49 (below, Nov 43).

the company made a lot more money in 1953 than it did 10 years earlier. The total page count production was comparable a decade apart, but a lot more dimes could be taken in during 1953. It would be fascinating to learn DC's exact circulation in both 1943

[continued on page 80]

Book Review

Paul Gravett

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AL WILLIAMSON ADVENTURES
(2003: Insight Studios Group, Westminster, MD)
trade hardcover $34.95
ISBN: 1-889317-17-9,
deluxe signed limited hardcover
(500 copies) $54.95
ISBN: 1-1889317-18-7

'Reality was a matter of perception. Alter perception and new universes were born, endless, infinite, where any reality imagined could actually exist."

These are the thoughts of a man named Strode, a fevered dreamer stifled by the demands of the mundane world. His desire to escape burns so strong in him that he develops the ability to "phase" himself out of reality and travel to the most fantastical alternative dimensions. Here he is the hero surrounded by space rockets, soaring cities, terrifying reptiles, voluptuous women and outbreaks of those alien toadstools (magic mushrooms, anyone?). Unwilling to return, Strode is finally judged insane and put away.

But in the closing frames he "phases out" for one last time and disappears.

Like Strode, comics illustrator Al Williamson has that same rare ability to phase out, and fortunately for us, Williamson has not yet vanished and still walks among us. Williamson has another rare ability. He can somehow conjure up such convincing vistas of these other worlds, that it seems he must have been there himself. For more than fifty years, his vividly imagined universes have enabled thousands of his readers to phase out of the everyday and step into wonder.

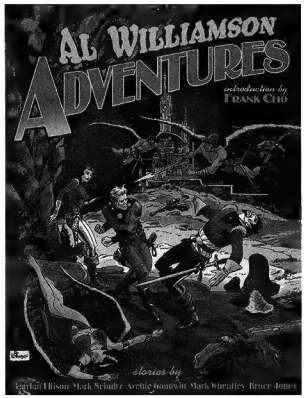
Phasing out is a fantasy a lot of us share. It may explain why the idea of an ordinary earthling finding themselves transported to another, more vivid and exciting world than ours is at the core of so much science fiction and comics. It's there in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter of Mars* through to the Silver Age's Adam Strange and his Zeta beam, and Richard Corben's *Den* graphic novels. It was also behind Alex Raymond's 1934 newspaper strip hero Flash Gordon, originally a polo player and Yale graduate who becomes the savior of the planet Mongo.

Flash Gordon made a lasting childhood impression on Al Williamson. As an American boy, he was already growing up in another world, the South American city of Bogota, Columbia. His fascination with Flash Gordon started when he was swept away by the 1940 movie serial starring Buster Crabbe. As he told S.C. Ringgenberg in *CBM* #51, "I was immediately taken with it. It took over my life." Drawing comics became his passion and his career and Williamson drew Flash Gordon himself on several occasions. For this new compilation of comics from 1978 to today Williamson provides a dynamic image of the hero for the front cover, while the endpapers present his stunning Flash Gordon tableau from the 1980 National Cartoonists' Society portfolio.

It was another dreamer, the late Archie Goodwin, who wrote "Out of Phase." Appropriately, he ran it in February 1986 in the final issue of Marvel's answer to *Heavy Metal* magazine, *Epic Illustrated*. It's one of five of the best recent science fiction stories rendered by Williamson which are compiled into this handsomely produced 100-page hardcover. Goodwin provides another, "Relic," from the December 1984 *Epic Illustrated*, featuring Al's bravura planetscapes and dedicated to his mentor, the great Roy G. Krenkel. The initials "RGK" also pop up in "Out of Phase" on a pair of retro-styled rocket ships.

Bruce Jones scripts "The Few and the Far," originally in the first 1982 issue of *Alien Worlds* from Pacific Comics. Williamson was in his element in Jones' homage to EC science fiction. The earliest piece here is Williamson's 1978 full color adaptation of Harlan Ellison's automobile nightmare "Along the Scenic Route." The reproduction, colored inks and white areas are so much clearer here than its original printing in *Ariel Book* 3. The most recent reprint is "One Last Job," written by Mark Schultz for *Dark Horse Presents* #120 as a touching tribute to Williamson's fellow EC genius, Wally Wood.

These SF yarns interweave between the six chapters of Williamson and Bruce Jones' "Cliff Hanger," their affectionate tribute to those thrill-a-minute Saturday



morning adventure serials. Movie-style opening and closing credits with blackout-style panel borders reinforce the cinematic effect. These first appeared in the color *Somerset Holmes* comic books from Pacific in 1983-84. Like all the other classics here, they benefit enormously from the crystal clear reproduction of the finest details, rich, deep blacks, bright white, high quality paper and large 9x12-inch format. Shooting from the original artwork really helps and reveals in several cases, mostly

at Pacific Comics, where production departments actually covered up much of Al's art with stats. It's like seeing some of the panels for the first time, re-mastered in crisp black and white. You really can phase out and lose yourself inside them.

And there's a bonus: a brand new, unpublished 11-page story "Tracker." It's written in the spirit of Williamson's realistic tough-guy detective work on *Secret Agent X-9* by comics creator Mark Wheatley, the book's editor and Insight Studios Group co-publisher. Mark told me, "I've been a fan of Al's since I was a kid and this book project has been a dream come true for me. To work with Al, to actually write a story for him, it just blows my child-fan mind at the reality." It's a clever, topical mystery with all the polish and panache Williamson is revered for. Mark has had some fun too, name-dropping such masters as Crane, Coll, Foster and Raymond as the characters. As a result, on the very first page, Mark gets away with Tracker alias Michael Caniff exclaiming, "Raymond, you're a big fat pain!" I spotted only one minor glitch: pages three and four have been printed in reverse order.

It would be hard to conceive of a finer showcase for Williamson's mature comics artistry than this labor of love. Frank Cho of *Liberty Meadows* supplies a very personal introduction and the limited edition comes with an extra color signed plate of two lizards dressed like Flash Gordon toasting two Williamson babes.

While I was immersing myself in this volume, I kept spotting Williamson's likenesses. He has always regularly used his own face and figure as references for his male leads. It's as if by modeling and posing, he is make-believing he is the hero. He is no longer at the drawing board but there inside the panel. What a perfect way to phase yourself out—by being able to draw yourself into "new universes...endless, infinite, where any reality imagined could actually exist." Thank you, Al, for taking us all along with you.

Weird Words

[continued from page 13]

while to improve. The Black Terror opens the book with a so-so story whose hero remained undistinguished through a fairly long career—despite the killer costume. The Judy of the Jungle yarn is OK, although the art falls short of Fawcette's Pantha. The only other strip worth mentioning is a Rodger Dodger where our teen goes mystical after reading a book on "Secrets of Yogi"—yahoo!

The final irony is that as *Thrilling*, *Exciting*, *Wonder* and *Startling* attained their heights of good stories, great art and glorious Xela covers—they died off, or in

Exciting #57 (Sep 1947) This is the first fully-developed "new look" Schomburg cover for this title. Judy of the Jungle defends an ancient jungle temple in a powerful image of a heroine who is fully a match for the gun-toting treasure thief.

the case of *Thrilling* morphed into a shadow of itself (#71 was the last Pantha cover, and *Exciting*'s last issue was #69 [Sep 1949] with the last Judy cover on #66). It certainly wasn't due to any lack of quality! Well, Better Publications still had some four-color life in them. After changing their name to Standard Comics in the early 1950s they found themselves with a huge hit on their hands in the young person of one Dennis the Menace.

That Wonderful Year—1943

[continued from page 78]

and 1953.

Two early Golden Age companies were temporarily gone in 1943—Fox and Chesler—and Centaur had left the scene for good a year earlier. Meanwhile, the predecessor of ACG put out its first issues with *Giggle* and *Ha-Ha*, but then no other significant new companies came along. It is noteworthy, however, that Magazine Enterprises entered the field with a single issue—*United States Marines* #1, which was among the first war titles. Some collectors consider the first four issues of *United States Marines* as productions of the Williams Wise imprint, but Stevenson and others figure it's really an ME title.

Archie continued to gain in popularity in 1943, the second full year of the feature, as MLJ evolved from super-heroes to teen-age hijinks. Hangman lost his title with #8 (Fall 1943) and Black Hood took over with #9 (Winter 1943-44) for 11 issues, becoming one of the last Golden Age costume heroes to receive his own title.

As a collector, my favorite era of comics history is 1948-60. But there's something special about those early 68-page gems. Since I began spending my comic-book dimes in 1956 with the 36-page issues, I remember feeling frustrated when I discovered that a dime not that many years earlier bought twice as much entertainment!

When DC first reproduced the cover of *Superman* #1—on the celebratory cover of #100 in 1955—the bold blurb "64 pages of action" in the bottom left corner of #1 was changed to "first issue." When *Superman Annual* #1 appeared in 1960, the "famous first issues" back cover reproduction of *Superman* #1 returned to "pages of action" but without "64"!

The company obviously didn't want readers to realize how large comic books once were. Little did those early Silver Age readers know that by 1962, the 10-cent comic would be history. But that's another wonderful year.

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Young Allies Comics #1
San Francisco pedigree
(Timely, 1941)
CGC NM+ 9.6
Off-white to white pages.
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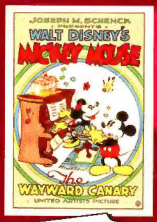
Wally Wood - Original Cover Art for Incredible Science Fiction #33 (EC, 1956).
Final Price: $26,450.00



Wayward Canary (United Artist, 1932) Mickey Mouse, one sheet.
Final Price: $41,400.00

Captain America Comics #7
(Timely, 1941)
CGC NM+ 9.6 Off-white pages.
Final Price: $25,300.00

Oregon Trail
(Republic, 1936)
John Wayne one sheet.
Final Price: $19,550.00

Batman #6 Allentown pedigree
(DC, 1941) CGC NM+ 9.6
Off-white to white pages.
Final Price: $39,100.00

Hal Foster - Original Comic Strip Art for Prince Valiant Sunday, dated 12-21-52 (King Features Syndicate, 1952).
Final Price: $32,200.00

Adventure Comics #79
Mile High pedigree (DC, 1942)
CGC NM+ 9.6 White pages.
Final Price: $29,900.00

Bringing Up Baby
(RKO, 1938)
photo gelatin
40" X 60"
Final Price:
$20,700.00

Superman #1
(DC, 1939) CGC VG- 3.5
Cream to off-white pages.
Final Price: $20,700.00

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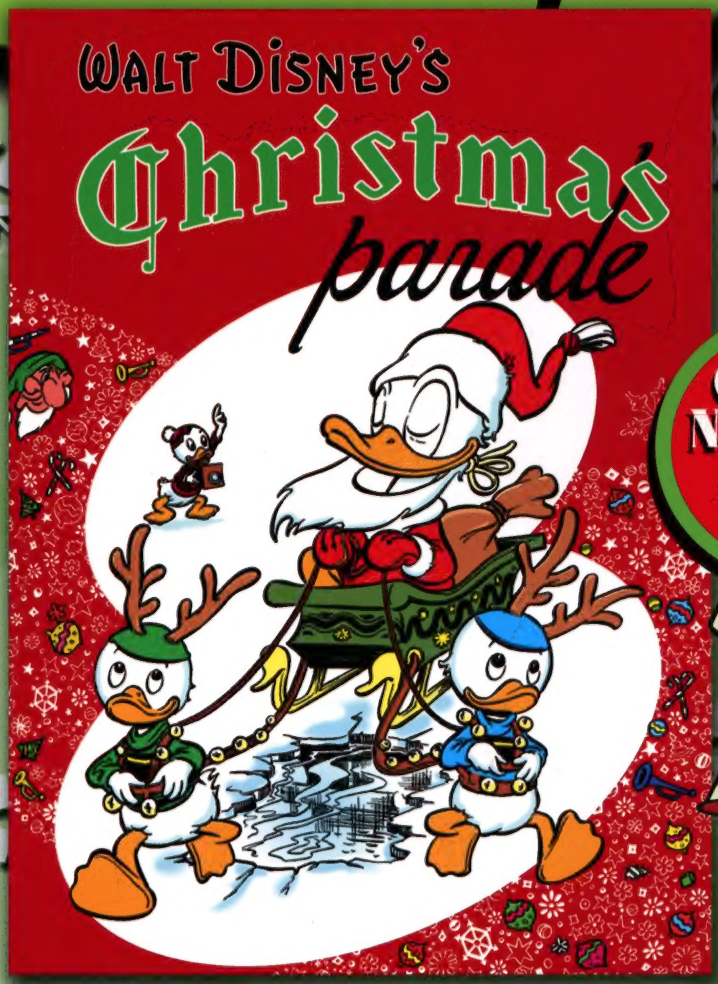

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